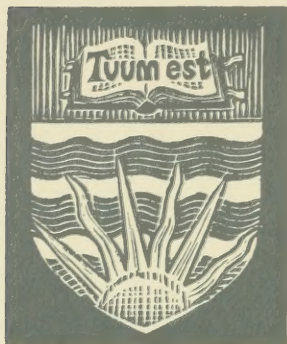


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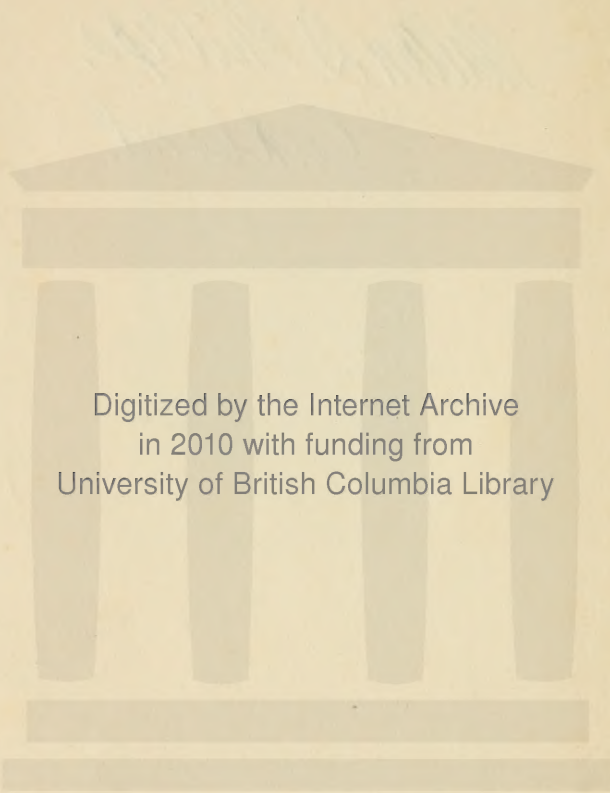


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SOCIAL STRUGGLES  
IN ANTIQUITY



**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**A HISTORY OF BRITISH SOCIALISM**

**THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF KARL MARX**

# SOCIAL STRUGGLES IN ANTIQUITY

BY  
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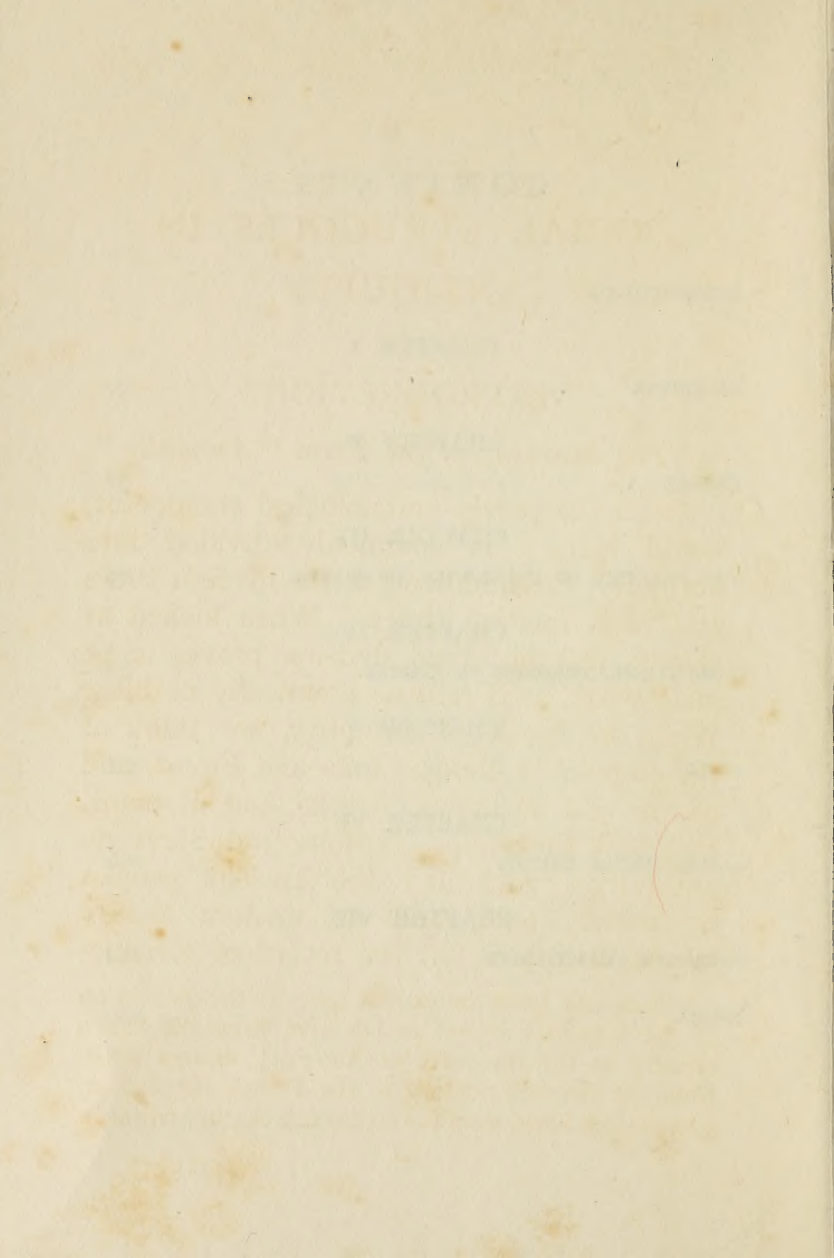
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# SOCIAL STRUGGLES IN ANTIQUITY

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. *The Meaning of the Term "Antiquity."*

FROM the purely chronological standpoint, world history is commonly divided into antiquity, the middle ages, the modern times and most modern times.<sup>1</sup> When looked at closely, this historical division proves to be inadequate, as it tells us practically nothing. When we speak of antiquity, we think of the empires of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and of the old Hebrews, Greeks and Romans. But had the Kelts, Teutons and Slavs no antiquity? And had the ancient peoples no middle ages, and no modern times? World history is not the record of a homo-

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquity*, from the earliest times to the dissolution of the Roman Empire; *middle ages*, from the fourth century to the discovery of America; *modern times*, from the fifteenth century to the French Revolution; *most modern times*, from the eighteenth century onwards.

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geneous humanity, which had remained in the period of antiquity until the time of the migration of races, and then entered upon the consecutive stages of the middle ages, and modern times. It treats rather of different States, Empires, Races and Peoples, all of which passed through their own stages of development at different periods, without waiting for others to reach the same level. It does not inform us, for instance, how it could come about that modern ideas may be discovered in antiquity, or that the beginnings of the Renaissance in Europe were mentally connected with ancient Greece, and that we moderns must often revert to ideas and opinions which were enunciated by the ancients more than two thousand years ago. Were these thinkers superior to time and space, and did they receive their wisdom through inspiration?

We shall get nearer the truth if we assume that "antiquity" did not form a mental and historical unity. Even the old Hebrews, Greeks and Romans had their period of antiquity, their middle ages, and their modern times. It was only that they appeared on the stage of human history earlier than the Teutons and Slavs, and they



likewise passed through their different periods, evolved certain institutions and ideas, which everywhere corresponded more or less to these periods. Thus the various peoples follow each other in the order of time, but their social and mental development follows a parallel course, with the exception of the most modern period which the ancients did not pass through, having been unable to produce the Industrial Revolution on the application of science to industry. If, therefore, the Latins and Teutons in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had mental affinities with the Greeks of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., this happened only because the Greeks of that time, having left their antiquity and their middle ages behind them, were living in the epoch of their renaissance, and this period brought forth corresponding mental products.

Each of these periods has its specific social, economic and intellectual features. In antiquity, or more correctly in the youth of peoples, men are everywhere linked together by blood relationship in the clan and the tribe, and live in common, on the basis of equality, knowing neither private property in land, nor monogamy, nor towns; mental life is very primitive; custom and habits



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dominate the simple life, which is mostly nomadic, and in any case not bound up with specific territories. Chiefs, judges or "kings" are at the head of the people. The art of writing is unknown, and the tribes in question do not themselves describe their social institutions. For our knowledge of this period we either have to thank travellers from a country on a higher level of civilisation who visit the district of the primitive tribes, such as, for example, Cæsar and Tacitus in respect to the old Teutons, the discoverers of America in respect to the Indian tribes, or we moderns reconstruct the original institutions from the old legends and traditions as well as from the remains of the old institutions which have survived into the time of recorded history. And as we have discovered that there is a certain regularity in the development of peoples, we are justified in making a generalisation or devising a theory that all peoples in the primitive social stage were unacquainted with individual property in land, lived on the basis of equality, and were organised in tribes.

The primitive period ends when the tribes become settled, and are gradually organised on a territorial basis (in communities, villages,

towns, provinces and countries), devoting themselves to agriculture. The settlers endeavour to continue the old social form, as they do not know of any other, but the new economic conditions require a new order, and soon the former homogeneous society begins to disintegrate into class divisions. Towns are built; trade and commerce begins to develop; and common ownership is replaced by private property.

Adaptation to the new conditions does not proceed smoothly. Those who suffer injury and oppression, and those who are dispossessed or loaded with debts, cling to the old and vanishing equality, hold it fast in their memories and idealise it, partly as Paradise, partly as the Golden Age. The biblical account of the Garden of Eden, and the expulsion from it of the first human beings (second and third chapters of Genesis), and the verses of the Greek poet Hesiod (*Works and Days*, verses 108-170) upon the Golden Age and its disappearance are the oldest recorded expressions of this sentiment which penetrated the whole of antiquity. Internal conflicts arise early; the old tribal chiefs—the so-called “kings” or “judges”—yield to the aristocracy, and dominion passes to

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the great landowners. At this point we are well into the "middle ages." Writing and religious dogma first arise at this stage; a mythology or a theology makes its appearance; laws are written down; the ten commandments of Israel, the laws of Draco in Greece, and in Rome the twelve tables of laws. The "middle ages" of the Israelites commenced in the tenth century B.C.; at that time the Israelites still had kings, but the real power was vested in the landowners—except perhaps at the time of David and Solomon. The middle ages of the Greeks began about the year 1000, and in the eighth century in the case of the Romans.

In the course of the middle ages trade and industry developed, and was carried on by the town burghers—the bourgeoisie. When the latter was sufficiently strengthened, the middle ages were nearing their close. The nobles either assimilated themselves to the bourgeoisie, or suffered extinction; the old systems of mythological and theological dogma are shaken, and new religious and philosophical ideas make headway; natural science comes into its own; art acquires more freedom and variety; the feudal bonds are dissolved—the Renaissance has begun. It



commenced in Greece in the sixth century; in Rome in the second century; in Israel this socio-economic development was interrupted by the national disasters: in the year 722 Israel (the northern Hebrew kingdom with Samaria as its capital) was vanquished and destroyed by Assyria; in the year 586 the same fate befell Judea (the southern Hebrew kingdom with Jerusalem as its centre); it was destroyed by the Babylonians; but the religious evolution was not only not interrupted, it was reinforced. In accordance with the spirit of the new time the Jews slowly attained to a conception of ethical monotheism; the Greeks to moral philosophy, and their leading thinkers to monotheism and social ethics (Socrates, Plato and the Stoics). The social struggles which broke out in the middle ages became more acute in the modern times; in Israel the poor against the rich; in Greece the popular masses (the Demos) against the usurers and expropriators, later the Proletariat against Capital; in Rome the Plebeians against the Patricians, the destitute against the rich, the slave multitudes against their oppressors. The chief demands were: the cancellation of debts and redistribution of the land.

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Social reforms were introduced, probably at the beginning of the seventh century in Sparta; in 621 in Judea; 594 (Solon) in Athens; 367 and 133 in Rome. In Sparta the class struggle was suspended for several centuries; on the other hand, it raged ever more furiously in Athens, and produced the greatest social philosopher of ancient times: Plato (born 427, died 347); likewise it brought forth a theory of Communism and of Natural Right. The social struggles of Rome exercised little intellectual influence of a revolutionary nature, as generally speaking the Romans were not an intellectual people, and contributed nothing to the advance of religion, philosophy and social ideas; Roman culture was a pale and belated imitation of Greek culture. The Romans appeared to have expended their entire mental energy upon war and the subjection of foreign peoples, as well as upon the establishment of the right of private property. In any history of intellectual achievements (jurisprudence excepted) the Romans occupy a quite subordinate position.

A glance at the economics and politics of antiquity reveals the great difference between that time and to-day. First we notice the complete absence of machinery and fine

tools, and in their stead we find multitudes of slaves; in the beginning debtors were enslaved by their creditors, and then slaves were recruited from prisoners of war and conquered natives, or from men who were captured by slave-dealers, and bought wholesale in the markets of Greece and Rome, to be subjected to the most ruthless exploitation. Among the Jews there were few slaves. The general aspect of the State also appears to be quite different. For centuries the State connoted only one town and its immediate surroundings, the most famous examples being Athens, Sparta and Rome. Such a city-state was called by the Greeks *Polis* (from whence "politics") and in Latin *civitas* (from whence "civilisation"). These city-states were therefore small territories containing about 30,000 to 40,000 free citizens. In Greece there were several city-states of this type, and likewise in Italy. Partly through war, partly through treaties of alliance, they united to form a great State. Each free citizen was a soldier at the same time, and productive labour devolved on the slave multitudes. First the Romans gradually created an empire (*Imperium*) with ruling classes and subjugated peoples. Later the

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Romans developed feudalism and villanage, when slave labour had proved to be unprofitable or inexpedient.

### 2. *Ancient Communistic Theory : Natural Rights.*

We have already seen how the expropriated sections of the people at the beginning of the middle ages clung to the traditions of the old state of equality, and idealised the past. The condition of nature or the primitive society became an ideal to which mankind must return. In his work on "Laws" (Third Book, second and third chapters), Plato wrote as follows about the men of primitive society :

Hence in those days mankind were not very poor, nor was poverty the cause of difference among them; and rich they could not have been, having neither gold nor silver—such at that time was their condition. And the community which has neither poverty nor riches will always have the noblest principles; in it there is no insults or injustice, nor again are there any contentions or envyings. And therefore they were good, and also because they were what is called simple-minded. Would not many generations living on in a simple manner, although ruder perhaps and more ignorant of the arts generally, although inferior to the men of our day in these respects, be simpler and more manly, and also more temperate and altogether more just? They



could hardly have wanted lawgivers, for they had no laws at this early period; they lived by habit and the customs of their ancestors.

The doctrine of equality of natural condition was then developed further, for at the time of Aristotle (the disciple of Plato and tutor of Alexander the Great) the opinion was already widespread "that the dominion of masters over slaves is against nature, and that the distinction between bond and free has not been made by nature, but only by human laws; and as this signifies an interference with the operations of nature it is therefore an injustice" (Aristotle's *Politics*, I. 3).

Both these quotations from Plato and Aristotle contain a good fragment of natural rights. The perfecting and diffusion of this conception was, however, the work of the Stoa in the third century. The founder of the Stoic school of thought was Zeno, who flourished about the year 300. Since the second century B.C. the disciples of this school have exercised a very considerable influence in Greek cultured circles, upon the thinkers of the Roman Empire, and upon the whole of civilised and Christian Europe until the present day. All the thinkers of Utopian Communism and of Anarchist Communism

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have, in great measure, come under this influence.

The doctrine of natural rights is a protest against the civil and legal institutions of the State which have arisen on the basis of private property. It is an idealisation of the democratic conditions of equality which characterised primitive communism. The appeal to nature, the cry, "Back to nature," is a condemnation of civilisation, and likewise a summons, either to revert to the old conditions, or to adopt them as the ideal for the legal and social transformation of the new conditions. The new age, which gave an impulse to the growth of towns, and the development of trade and industry, and which destroyed the remains of common property in land, represented a revolt against nature, agriculture and the simple manners of country life, and a turning towards an unnatural, artificial life, involving luxury, manifold activity, and a labyrinth of legal enactments and State regulations. In the primitive society there were no man-made laws, no State, no external coercive institutions. Nature, penetrated and filled with the divine spirit, was regulated by innate laws, which enjoined goodness, justice and righteousness.

The ethics of natural laws were plainly valid, and were dictated by human reason. They were above human edicts, or what is called positive law. They held good for all beings who bore the stamp of humanity; all men were free and equal.

In the primitive state of mankind, in the Golden Age, and in the epoch before the Fall, the laws of nature or reason prevailed; men lived together without the State, without external coercion, without legal regulations and tutelage, and followed the natural injunctions to do good and be righteous. But the succeeding generations were corrupted; greed, discontent and internal strife appeared, and men created the State, private property, and the multitudinous laws, without thereby attaining to the old happiness. Human society became sick and suffered. The only remedy was to abandon the artificial institutions, and return to the natural, and live in harmony with nature.

The Stoa were anarchist-communists and their outlook was international. In this they resembled the Jewish prophets, but the latter looked only to Jahveh for guidance, while the former found their lawgiver in divine nature. Both tendencies met in primitive Christianity.

## CHAPTER I

### PALESTINE

#### I. *Social Conditions.*

As hordes of nomads from the north Arabian and east Egyptian deserts the Hebrews invaded Canaan in the twelfth century B.C. Organised in tribes and clans on the principle of blood relationship, their leaders brought them to conquer new fruitful territory, and to settle down. Bold and easily excited, but hardened by the privations of their life in the wilderness, and welded together by their age-long tribal discipline, they overcame, in the course of protracted struggles, the resistance of the Canaanites, who were superior to them in civilisation, and took possession of their country. The victorious barbarians divided the land by lot among their tribes, and the latter among their families. Individual property in land was at first unknown to them; the tribes regarded the partitioned land as a common possession, and the families held

their lands for the benefit of the tribe (Num. xxxvi.).

A special term for property is unknown in Hebrew. The word which corresponds nearest to this idea is "nachlah" (hereditary portion). A property owner is called "lord," or "baal" in Hebrew, a common Semitic word which signifies man or generator. Partly as a result of uninterrupted possession and of individual cultivation and enjoyment, and partly as a result of the influence of Canaanite civilisation, the Hebrew families became accustomed to regard their possession as absolute property, and to dispose of it arbitrarily. In the course of time sales and mortgages undermined the old economic equality, and class divisions were introduced into the former homogeneous society. \*

The highest god of the Hebrews, who accompanied them into Canaan, was JHWH (Jahweh or Jehovah), a god of the desert, of the scorching heat, of the consuming fire and of the thunderstorm, a war hero abroad and the protector of tribal cohesion at home, a just legislator, who commanded men to lead a strict, austere life. To the Jews Jahweh appeared as the symbol of the physical characteristics of the desert, as well as of the economic and



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moral conditions of life of hordes of tough nomads. The sacrifice which they offered to him was scanty, some meal and a lamb. But what else could nomads of the wilderness offer? Frugal and temperate, like their lives, was the god whom they worshipped and feared. In the likeness of their physiographic environment and social organisation the Hebrews created their god.

The Canaanite god Baal was of a different character; like the Greek Dionysos or Bacchus, he was the religious symbol of the germinating powers of nature, the god of a country flowing with milk and honey, and corn and wine. He made men, animals, and plants fruitful; he represented the mystery of generation; his consecrated mountain tops and altars became noisy public places, his sacrifices became luxurious banquets, his sacred groves became sheltered nooks for the sensual embraces of the sexes. In the eyes of the prophets the service of Baal was vain fornication and whoredom. The civilisation of Canaan had left the stage of tribal organisation far behind, commerce and trade were carried on in towns, and private property existed in all things.

The Hebrews (or Israelites), transplanted to

the new environment, made agriculture the basis of their society, and quickly succumbed to the influence of Canaanite civilisation. The religious life of the nomads proved inadequate for the new needs of agricultural life: Jahweh could not fructify the field, the vineyard and the olive tree—being a desert god, he lacked this quality—and the newly emerging social divisions could not be harmonised with the commands of Jahweh. Life proved to be stronger than an idea. Apostasy from Jahweh set in, either by investing him with qualities which belonged to Baal, and modelling the service of Jahweh on the cult of Baal, or by the Hebrews abandoning their old god and going over to Baal. From the ninth century onwards the people were convulsed by a religious crisis, which assumed an acute or mild form according to circumstances and the outstanding personalities. Between the supporters of Jahweh and those of Baal a conflict arose, in which the prophets, clothed as desert beduins, took their stand at the head of the supporters of Jahweh, first Elijah and Elisha, in whom the pure traditional feeling of religion predominated, and later such powerful preachers as Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, who led the class struggle of the

dispossessed, plainly demanded social justice, and hailed Jahweh as the Judge of the world. Then the crisis was sharpened by the economic development of Israel, and the class division of society to which it gave rise. The conception of Jahweh acquired a meaning which, as we shall see, carried with it a revolution in the religious sphere.

The dissolution and transformation of the primitive conditions was furthered by the numerous wars, which were undertaken partly to defend and partly to extend the country. The wars and their vicissitudes aroused (in the tenth century B.C.) among the agricultural tribes the desire to form a central government, and have a king, who could undertake the defence of their borders against hostile attacks, and take care of their interests as against the foreigner. The new institution appeared to commend itself. If previously the tribes of Israel had to wage a desperate struggle for their existence, now they soon succeeded in winning a position which compelled respect. Neighbouring nations no longer dared to attack Israel, and the peace seemed to be a durable one (2 Sam. vii. 1; 1 Kings v. 4).

The tribute of precious metals was con-

siderable; agriculture prospered, and as the Israelites, after subduing the Canaanites, became possessed of the caravan roads and a portion of the sea-coast, they entered into relations with the seafaring and industrious Phœnicians. The monarchy gave a powerful impulse to trade. The wars with Edom in the ninth and eighth centuries were trade wars; Elath (Eziongeber), the Red Sea port, must be conquered, so that gold may be brought from Ophir and colonial goods from India. The kings Jehoshaphat, Joram, Amaziah and Azariah all fought near the bay of Akaba, and when the Syrian King Rezin captured the port of Elath, he "drove out the Jews" (2 Kings xvi. 6). In the north it was the tribe of Zebulun "which dwelt at the haven of the sea, at the haven of ships, whose border was Sidon" (Gen. xlix. 13). In agriculture and trade Israel attained to the level of Canaanite civilisation, and consequently surrendered to the religion of Baal, and danced before the golden calf.

## 2. *Class Antagonisms and Prophets.*

The days when Israel sat beneath the grape vine and fig tree, with internal concord and freedom, each one doing what seemed to him

right, vanished never to return. Economic inequality increased, and with it the conflict between the opposing classes: the poor and the rich, the rulers and the ruled, the oppressed and the oppressors. The possessing class adhered, in conformity with the needs of their material and spiritual life, to Baal, the god of fertility, of enjoyment, and of gain; the disinherited class clung to Jahweh, whom they were accustomed to regard as the god of tribal solidarity, of common ownership, of goodness and mercy. How good was Israel when its tribes were encamped in the desert! How beautiful were its tents! Israel loved Jahweh, and Jahweh loved Israel. To the disinherited the nomadic time and the old tribal organisation appeared in the light of the Golden Age. How gentle and loving are the tones in which the prophets, otherwise so ruthless and severe, speak of the youth of Israel!

As we have seen, the conflict between Jahweh and Baal was a class struggle brought about by the alteration in the economic conditions, worked out under religious forms.

To Jahweh and his prophets the disinherited turned in their need. "Thy servant, my husband, is dead," complained a woman to the prophet Elisha, "and thou knowest that



thy servant did fear Jahweh : and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen " (2 Kings iv. 1). Semitic capital in Canaan assumed the same harshness and shape as Arian capital in Greece and Rome, that is, it was usurer's and merchant's capital. The anger which the usurer aroused in Israel is shown by the Hebrew expression for usurer, " neshech," which means literally " to bite." The increasing use of money and the development of private property disintegrated the old economic order and the old customs. Opulence and luxury in the circles of the wealthy, want, oppression and enslavement for debt in the circles of the dispossessed. The inevitable result was a class antagonism, of which it may be said—so far as historical evidence goes—that it did not lead to the revolts and butchery which shook social life to its foundations in Greece and Rome, but it created a singular socio-religious ferment, of which the prophets were the exponents.

These ethical heroes, who threw into the struggle for social justice the unquenchable ardour of their fiery souls, were gradually constrained to recognise social ethics as the most important element of religion. When this process of religious transformation had in

some degree been completed, Jahweh ceased to be a tribal and local god, and became a general god of righteousness. Thus the prophets elevated the primitive social idol of the nomadic Hebrew tribes to the position of universal god of truth and humanity.

They gathered strength from their efforts, and grew from national leaders into universal seers, thanks also to the political condition and geographical position of Palestine, which plunged them into the whirlpool of world politics. For, owing to its position and physical characteristics, Palestine formed the bridge-head between Asia Minor and Egypt, and was therefore a connecting link between the two rival world empires of that time. It was exposed to invasions, it became the cockpit of the struggles of Asiatic or Egyptian Empires, but these historic vicissitudes made the intellect of its Jewish inhabitants alert, and turned their mind to problems of foreign politics. The leading spirits of the nation, the prophets, cast their eyes over the great empires which strove with each other for mastery; they weighed the worth of men and things, of governments and countries, in the scales of social righteousness; Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians and Persians became instruments in

the hand of Jahweh, and the world was penetrated by His will and His plan. The tempest raged through the wide domains of history, bringing down the pride of empires, humiliating the vain and shattering the haughty. In the collapse of all earthly power, a moral world order manifested itself, majestic and unassailable, the centre of which Israel occupied. The prophets became the foretellers of the disasters which would overtake Israel and Judah, and of their final purification, as also of the redemption of mankind—the redemption from wars and strife, from struggles at home and abroad, by the triumph of the spirit, by the dominion of justice and right, which Jahweh, through the medium of the Jews, would spread over the whole of mankind. Elemental power was the life force of these men, it must have been a physically and intellectually strong race which could produce such powerful personalities. They began with purely local struggles for the oppressed, and closed their imperishable careers with a moral world mission.

### 3. *Social Righteousness.*

Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa, lifted up his voice against the whole of the inhabitants of

Syria and Palestine, and announced the woe that would befall them on account of their sins. "Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults are in the midst thereof. For they know not to do right, who store up violence and robbery" (iii. 9, 10). They believed they could fulfil the will of Jahweh by sacrifices and prayers. But Jahweh said: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" (v. 21-25). Jahweh demanded not sacrifices and prayers, but justice and righteousness. The judges are not to decide in favour of the rich; the privileged and possessing classes are not to oppress the poor and needy; the corn-dealers must cease deceiving the hungry. Amos censured the princes and the mighty ones, the wealthy and the upstarts, who lived in stone palaces, and laid upon beds of ivory and stretched them-

selves upon their couches, and ate the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall, and sang idle songs to the sound of the viol, and drank wine out of bowls, and anointed themselves with ointment, but grieved not for the ill condition of the people. The chastisement would not be withheld. "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land" (vii. 11). Therefore, "Seek good and not evil, that ye may live. Hate the evil and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate; it may be that the Lord of Hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (v. 14, 15).

Hosea reminded the children of Israel that Jahweh had cause to be dissatisfied with them, "because there is no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God in the land. There is nought but swearing and lying, and killing and stealing and committing adultery; they break out and blood touches blood" (iv. 1, 2) Israel has become proud of its riches. "The merchant has the balances of deceit in his hand; he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, I am become rich, I have found me wealth" (ii. 8, 9). In matters of external policy too Israel forsook Jahweh. Like a



straying dove, Israel ran here and there, forming alternate alliances with Egypt and Assyria, to secure protection against hostile invasions. Therefore, the country suffers, and the people are ruined. How different was Israel when young, and living in the desert (xi. 1, 2). But now "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies" (x. 13). There is no escape from the punishment. Therefore, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground (x. 12) . . . keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually."

Then will Jahweh "heal their backsliding, and love them," and make a covenant with them, and will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, for the covenant will rest on righteousness and judgment, on lovingkindness and on mercy" (ii. 18, 19).

Micah's righteous anger was directed against the rich and the mighty of the country: "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire,

and the prophets thereof divine for money. . . . Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the Lord's house as the high places of a forest " (iii. 9-12). The people are divided by mistrust, dissension and mutual strife. Jahweh is not to be placated by sacrifices. " Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? " (vi. 7-8).

The eloquent Isaiah, of whom Micah was the potent echo, subjected the whole social life of Palestine to a ruthless examination, and found nothing good in it. Justice and righteousness had disappeared, and pure morals had been supplanted by luxury, corrupting fashions, unbridled seeking for enjoyment, and the pursuit of wealth and glory. The poor, the widow and the orphan were oppressed and exploited, the small peasant was expropriated, and large estates were formed: " Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of

the land " (v. 8). The prophet cried out against the legal attempts to sanction this state of things: "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers that write perverseness: to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right of the poor of my people, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey" (x. 1-2). Therefore has Jahweh turned his countenance from the prayers and sacrifices: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth, And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (i. 13-15). The judgment of Jahweh will fall upon all that is lofty and proud, and they will be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant imagery (ii. 11-16). Jahweh "will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and he will take away the bravery of their anklets, and their cauls, and their crescents, their pendants and their bracelets, and their mufflers, the

head tires and the ankle chains, the sashes and the perfume boxes, the amulets, the rings and the nose jewels, the festival robes and the mantles. . . . Thy men shall fall by the sword and thy mighty in the war " (iii. 17-24). And Israel will be led into captivity, its honourable men will be famished, and the multitude parched with thirst, and the mighty men shall be humbled (v. 13-15). Then " the meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the holy one of Israel, for the terrible one is brought to nought and the scorner is consumed " (xxix. 19, 20). But Israel may still be saved if it turns back to Jahweh, and obeys his commands : " Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow " (i. 16).

Jeremiah (*circa* 600 B.C.), as man and thinker probably the greatest among the prophets, in the name of Jahweh, reminded the house of Jacob and the tribes of Israel of the wilderness period : " I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, how thou wentest after me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown.

Israel was holiness unto the Lord. And I brought you into a plentiful land, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof. But when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination " (ii. 2-7). The prophet predicted in passionate but inexorable words the captivity of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem. This was the burden of his visions, and he sought to intercede with Jahweh on Judah's behalf; man is not free in his acts, he has no freedom of will: " O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps " (x. 23). But social justice is the breath of the people's life, and the moral system of the world must be instituted. For their neglect of Jahweh the Jews must suffer, and they must become fit for their historic mission.

Zephaniah, an older contemporary of Jeremiah, described the entire struggle in a few chapters, and announced the approach of Jahweh's day—the impending punishment of Judah. " There shall be the noise of a cry from the Fish gate (in Jerusalem) and an howling from the second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are



cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. . . . Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy" (i, 10, 11, 18).

With less prophetic frenzy, but with greater learning and more extensive knowledge, Ezekiel handled the problem at the time of the Babylonian exile (about 560 B.C.). "Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool. Ye kill the fatlings, but ye feed not the sheep. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost, but with force and with rigour have ye ruled over them. . . . O my flock, thus saith the Lord, I judge between the rams and the he-goats, between the fat cattle and the lean cattle, Because ye thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them away, therefore will I save my flock, and they shall be no more a

prey " (xxxiv. 2-22). Each man is responsible for his actions, and to do evil or good is within the choice of everyone. Therefore, Israel must be converted, and shall fulfil the commandments of Jahweh.

Interwoven with the censorious preaching and the foretelling of disaster we find among all the prophets a message of salvation to Israel, and a firmly rooted belief in the final redemption of mankind. The prophecies reach their highest point with the Second Book of Isaiah (from chapter xl. to the end), the period being about the year 540 B.C. The Jews are to be the evangelists of social righteousness. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound " (lxi. 1). If it will take this mission on itself, this people will become the centre of mankind. Long despised and held to be unworthy, it will become the jewel of the world. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples, but the Lord shall arise

upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. . . . Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever " (lx. 1-21).

His contemporary, Ezekiel, drew a picture of a Jewish kingdom of God, in which equality of men and of possessions was made the chief condition. "Ye shall divide the land for inheritance, one as well as another. . . . And it shall come to pass that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the aliens that sojourn among you; they shall be unto you as the homeborn among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance among you with the tribes of Israel " (xlvi. 14-22).

With the ideal of justice and righteousness that of everlasting peace was closely bound up: "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. . . . They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any

more " (Isaiah ii. 4-11). Zechariah foresees the time when Jehovah "will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Israel, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, even to the ends of the earth. . . . Not by might, nor by power, but by the spirit shall the kingdom of God be established " (iv. 6).

And one of the last prophets, Malachi, asks the human question: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously, every man against his brother? " (ii. 10).

#### 4. *Efforts at Reform.*

In the last quarter of the seventh century (621 B.C.) an attempt was made to enact reform laws which would mitigate to some extent the evils. These reform laws are laid down in Deuteronomy and Leviticus: they comprise the essentials of the two chief demands of the dispossessed throughout antiquity (even those of Hellas and Rome): relief of debtors and redistribution of the land. They proclaimed that the land belonged to Jahweh, in other words, that the land is the

common possession of the whole people. "And the land shall not be sold for ever." A return to freedom and equality is to take place every fifty years. "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and it shall be a jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." Meanwhile the lot of the debtor is to be alleviated: "If thy brother be waxen poor with thee, and sell himself unto thee, thou shalt not make him to serve as a bond-servant, but as a hired servant and as a sojourner he shall serve with thee unto the year of jubilee. And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his brothers" (Lev. xxv.). A year of release is to take place every seven years, in which debts will be cancelled. "Every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbour; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, because the Lord's release hath been proclaimed. Howbeit, there shall be no poor among you. . . . If there be among you a poor man of one of the brethren, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother. Beware there be not a base thought in thine heart, saying,



The year of release is at hand (and my money will be lost). Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor in the land. And if thy brother, an Hebrew man or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, then in the seventh year thou shalt let them go free from thee " (Deut. xv.). Mortgage rights are to be restricted. " When thou dost lend thy neighbour any manner of loan, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand without, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge unto thee. And if he be a poor man, thou shalt surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment " (Deut. xxiv. 10-13). Widows and orphans especially may not be distrained upon. The wages of labour are to be paid daily (xxiv. 14-15). Indicative of the still strong influence of the traditions of common property is the permission to pluck the ears of the neighbour's corn (xxiii. 25) as well as the injunctions as to forgotten sheaves, the gleanings, and the leavings behind of a portion of the harvest for the dispossessed. There is, however, evidence to the effect that the social reform laws were not entirely effective.

The injunction regarding jubilee year was never put into force, and the law of the year of release was abolished in the post-exilian epoch during the commercial prosperity. The prophet Jeremiah lamented the apathy towards this law, and in Nehemiah we again hear the people complaining of the usury practised by their own countrymen, of debts, bondage and the mortgaging of fields and vineyards (about 500 B.C.).

The Talmud, which in its juridical section is a codification of the laws which had grown up on the basis of private property and commercial intercourse, has transmitted to us the legal formula in which the repeal of the law of release was couched. The reason of this repeal was of a purely economic nature. The Talmud states in this connection: "If the fear of release is to be maintained the door would have to be closed to the borrowers." It goes on to say that as the law relating to the year of release also enjoins that "no evil thoughts should be allowed to arise in the heart, so that help would be refused on account of the proximity of the year of release," and that as such thoughts could not be avoided, the Rabbis therefore decided to declare the whole law null and void. In other words, the

economic development proved to be stronger than the social legislation.

Of the entire social legislation there remained only an extensive Poor Law code.

The communal traditions, however, still persisted among the poorer classes. Even in the time of Jesus we find the following remarkable indications as to the property divisions which prevailed among the Jews (*Pirke Aboth*, v. 13): "There are four classes among men: one says, What is mine is mine, and what is thine is thine; that is a sort of middle class (the bourgeoisie), or, as many say, Sodom;—another says, What is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine, common people;—another class says, What is mine is thine, and what is thine is also thine—that is the pious class;—again, another says, What is mine is mine, and what is thine is also mine—that is the class of evildoers." This information regarding the four categories of citizens which existed at that time in Palestine, is extremely instructive. We perceive the bourgeoisie at the head, with their strict ideas of property; and it is observed mordantly that these are a Sodomite class. Then come the Communists, who recognise neither mine nor thine; they are simply described as the common people,

as the 'am ha-arez. Further, there are the pious, who renounce all property, and thus embrace apostolic poverty, the *paupertas evangelica*, which attained such great significance in primitive Christianity and in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The fourth category requires no explanation: they are the exploiters, thieves and murderers.

### 5. *The Jewish Communists—the Essenes.*

It was not merely the common people who had no sense of private property. Several thousands of the noblest men among the Jews of Palestine made the attempt to introduce Communism into practical life.

These were the Essenes, who first appeared in the second century B.C. and passed as a special sect. They were mentioned with high esteem and admiration by all contemporary writers who made any reference to them. The Jewish intellectuals, like Philo and Josephus, who were familiar with Greek philosophy and generally with the intellectual life of the Roman Empire, spoke of the communal principle as the quintessence of virtue. Josephus regarded Cain, the fratricide, as the founder of private property (*Jewish Antiquities*, chap. ii). It is a notable fact that Cain

was also the first to establish a city-state. With great satisfaction, Philo narrates: "There lived in Palestine 4000 virtuous men, called Essenes; they dwelt in the villages and avoided the towns on account of the licentiousness which was customary among the inhabitants. Many of them carried on agriculture, others pursued peaceful avocations, and in this wise employed themselves and their neighbours. They accumulated neither silver nor gold, nor did they acquire lands in order to procure large incomes for themselves; but they toiled merely to secure the necessary means for supporting life. Thus they are practically the only men who possess no property, not because of the mischance of fortune, but because they do not strive after riches, and yet they are, in truth, the richest of all, as they count as riches the absence of needs and contentment. You will not find among them artificers of arrows, javelins, swords, helmets, breastplates and shields, nor any who are engaged in the construction of implements of war, or generally anything which pertains to war. Commerce, liquor manufacturing, and seafaring have never entered their heads, for they desire to avoid all things that give rise to covetousness. There



are also no slaves among them. All are free and work for each other. They despise rulers and governors not only because the latter are unjust in violating equality, but also because they are ungodly in abolishing an institution of nature, which, like a mother, creates and nourishes all as true and loving brothers, a relationship which is destroyed by triumphant cunning and avarice, which have put alienation in place of trustfulness and hatred in place of love. The Essenes are taught the principles of godliness, holiness and righteousness in the government of the house and the community, in the knowledge of what is good and what is evil, and they accept as their three moral conceptions or principles, love of God, of virtue and of mankind. The manifestations of love of mankind are benevolence, equity and community in goods, which cannot be praised too highly. We may add something about the latter. First of all, none has a house which does not belong to all. In addition to the fact that they dwell together socially, every house is open to comrades who come from a distance. Also the storehouse and the provisions contained therein belong to all, as well as the articles of clothing; likewise the eatables are available to those who

do not observe the common meal-times. And generally the condition of dwelling, eating and living together socially has, among no other race, been carried to such a high degree of perfection as among these men. For they do not keep for themselves what they have earned during the day, but put it together and offer it for general consumption. The sick and aged are treated with the greatest care and gentleness."

Philo states further that the Essenes were everywhere held in the greatest esteem. "Even the most cruel rulers and proconsuls were unable to do them harm. On the contrary, they quailed before the unsullied virtue of these men, met them in a friendly spirit, as such as had the right to make their own laws and were free by nature; they commended their meals in common and their most praiseworthy institution of holding goods in common, which was the most striking proof of a full and happy life."

Josephus, too, was pleased to refer to the Essenes and wrote: "They despise wealth, and the common life they practise is marvellous. Thus, it is impossible to find among them any one who wishes to distinguish himself by property. For it is a law that those

who are admitted into this sect transfer their property to the order. Consequently there is neither privation and poverty, nor superfluity and luxury."

In regard to marriage, it is stated by some that the Essenes preferred celibacy, while others assert they married. It would appear that in this respect they thought as the Apostle Paul, who gave the preference to celibacy, but did not forbid marriage. With the quotations we have given from *Pirke Aboth* and the institutions of the Essenes, we have already penetrated into the intellectual life of primitive Christianity.

The anti-political tendency among the Essenes is noteworthy; they turned aside from the State, and held social ethics and social economy to be the essential things. This feature was characteristic throughout the entire history of the Israelites in Palestine. In contrast to the Greeks, who were engaged so vigorously with constitutional questions and investigated the most various forms of government, the Jews passed through only a solitary political crisis, about the year 1000 B.C., when they progressed from tribal organisation to State organisation and founded a kingship. Gradually there developed among

the Jews a strong antipathy to all State organisation involving compulsion. This antipathy found its first expression in a condemnation of the monarchy, in 1 Samuel viii., which is of later origin. The conduct of the great imperial Powers which dominated Palestine—the whole history of the great ancient empires whose waves overflowed into Palestine—was, in fact, not calculated to make State politicians of a people which so earnestly sought after righteousness. A strong sidelight on the attitude of the Jews towards the State is thrown by the following passage which is preserved in the Talmud: “No person here below (on earth) becomes a State official, but is condemned above (in heaven) as an evil-doer.” God is the sole ruler, and his commandments are the principles and guides of mankind.

## CHAPTER II

### GREECE

#### I. *Economic and Social Development.*

THE Dorian, Ionian and Æolian tribes, which came originally from the North, and which made themselves masters of the south of the Balkan peninsula, and became celebrated in history as Hellenes or Greeks, were organised, on the basis of blood relationships, into gentes, phratries and phylens.

Of these tribes, the Dorian conquerors of Laconia (Sparta) and the Ionian conquerors of Attica (Athenians) specially distinguished themselves by military deeds, by social institutions, or by philosophical, artistic and political achievements. In the annals of Socialism both peoples have played a conspicuous part.

The Spartans, and the Dorians generally, practised communism, whilst the Ionians were the theorists and provided them with a philosophical basis.



Originally, the Hellenes raised cattle and tilled the land, and knew neither private property nor towns. We do not know how long this condition may have lasted, nor in what manner it came to an end. In the last half of the ninth century, when the oldest Hellenic poetry—the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—was composed, a division of classes and a disintegration of society had already set in. Hellas had entered upon the period of its middle ages. As Plato relates in his book *On Laws* (Book III. chap. 4), in Hellas, at the time of the Trojan War, described by Homer in the above-mentioned poems, towns were already in existence, and rebellions broke out in them against the old archaic ruling caste; banishments, murders and executions were often occurring.

The primitive conditions of Hellas were apparently undermined by war, trading and sea-faring. War was reckoned a profession in Hellas, like hunting and fishing. It was held in high estimation; even the greatest Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, were unable to conceive of eternal peace. The quest of the Golden Fleece, and the protracted struggles waged against Troy and to secure access to the Black Sea point to the con-

clusion that the Hellenes found themselves at that time in the conditions proper to the middle ages.

Colonisation had made a start, and with it trade and sea-faring. The Dorians founded colonies in Crete, Rhodes and Kos, in addition to Knidos and Halikarnossos (to the south of the western coast of Asia Minor). Between 750 and 600 B.C. the Hellenes pushed forward their colonial settlements; they became the successors of the Phenicians. Ionian settlements appeared on the coasts of the Black Sea, in Sicily, Lower Italy, and North Africa. In conjunction with colonising activity, trade received an impetus, and soon invigorated industrial activity. The Ionians manufactured pottery, ornaments, wine, linen, cloth and weapons. Money economy replaced natural economy and local barter. Even in Homeric times cattle served as a measure of value and medium of exchange; later, copper and iron coins were minted, and gold and silver money appeared in the eighth century. The thirst for wealth which had revealed itself even in the Homeric period—Ulysses (*Odyssey*) collected property and goods during his wanderings—became henceforth a passion with the possessing class. The first

to suffer from this cause were the peasants, who were sold up or expropriated. About a century after the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, we hear the first individual poet, Hesiod, of Askra in Boëtia, whom tradition says was a small peasant, give utterance to complaints at the oppression of the small property owners, at the growing injustices, and the excessive power of the rich. In moving words he bewails the disappearance of the Golden Age, when "work was still done for its own sake, and its results were blessed"; the second, third and fourth ages had also disappeared, which were followed by the iron age of painful and harmful toil:

"Would that then I had not mingled with the fifth race of men, but had either died before or been born afterwards. For now in truth is the iron race, neither will they ever cease by day nor at all by night from toil and wretchedness, corrupt as they are, but the gods will give them severe cares.

"Nor will sire be like-minded to sons, nor sons at all to parent, nor will brother be dear, even as it was aforetime to brother.

"Might is right; and one will sack the city of another; nor will there be any favour

to the trusty nor the just nor the good, but rather they will honour a man that doeth evil and is overbearing. But the baneful griefs shall remain behind, and against evil there shall be no resource" (Hesiod, *Works and Days*).

The strong fall upon the good like birds of prey. Following the above-quoted verses Hesiod relates the fable of the hawk and the nightingale :

" Thus the hawk addressed the nightingale of variegated throat, as he carried her in his talons, when he had caught her very high in the clouds.

" She then, pierced on all sides by his crooked talons, was wailing piteously, whilst he victoriously addressed his speech to her : ' Wretch, wherefore criest thou ? 'tis a much stronger that holds thee. Thou wilt go that way by which I may lead thee, songstress though thou art ; and my supper, if I choose, I shall make, or shall let go. But senseless is he who chooses to contend against them that are stronger, and he is robbed of victory, and suffers griefs in addition to indignities.' So spake the fleet-flying hawk, broad-pinioned bird."

Hesiod is, however, no rebel. He exhorts

his people to return to honest labour, and thereby attain to prosperity :

“ Now, work is no disgrace, but sloth is a disgrace. And if thou shouldst work, quickly will the sluggard envy thee growing rich, for esteem and glory accompany wealth.”

He is not a prophet of doom, or foreteller of disaster, but a mild moral preacher, quite in the spirit of the Proverbs of Solomon.

## 2. *Economic Antagonisms.*

The moralists, however, were not able to retard the disintegrating process. The money system, trade and industry, divided Hellenic society into rich and poor. The small land-worker fell into debt, interest was high, the usurer harsh and legislation implacable, as it was made in the interest of the possessing classes—which is always the case when the community develops into the class state. Plato's observations upon this subject are excellent. In his work *The Laws* (Fourth Book) he asserts in his truly philosophic manner : “ Now you must regard this as a matter of first-rate importance (questions of law and constitution). For what is to be the standard of just and unjust is once more



the point at issue. Men say that the law ought not to regard either military virtue or virtue in general, but only the interests and power and preservation of the established form of government. This is thought by them to be the best way of expressing the natural definition of justice . . . and do you suppose that the tyranny or democracy, or any other conquering power, does not make the continuance of the power which is possessed by them the first or principal object of their laws? And whoever transgresses this law is punished as an evildoer by the legislator who calls the laws just." Thus speaks the supporter of the class state. "Now according to our view," declares Plato, "laws are not right which are not passed for the good of the whole state." In the iron age, however, class government prevailed, and the small people had much to suffer. The debtors who were not able to pay, fell, with their families, into servitude, the handicraftsmen lost their independence, as also the small business people. By the side of the noble class of large landowners arose a rich bourgeoisie, which soon intermarried, and grew into a homogeneous ruling class. "The base intermarries with the noble, and classes are

confused," complains a poet. Wealth created honour and power. At the end of the sixth century Hellas reached the beginning of modern times. Theognis of Megara, a proud but impoverished squire, who despised the plutocracy as much as the lower classes, sketched a picture of the manners of this epoch. He flourished in the third quarter of the sixth century in Megara, which lay between Corinth and Athens. At this place about the year 649 the enraged masses had fallen on the flocks of the large landowners, and slaughtered them, as the increased sheep-raising had led to the breaking up of numerous farmsteads, similar to the state of England at the time of Thomas More. In his *Elegies* and *Proverbs* Theognis laments :

"It is not for nothing, Plutus, that mortals do honour thee most, for of truth thou bearest distress with ease. For, verily, it is fitting for the bettermost to have wealth indeed, but poverty is proper for a mean man to bear. Many dunces have riches, but others seek what is noble though harassed by severe poverty, but impossibilities of working lie beside both. The one class want of riches impedes—of intellect the other. For to the multitude of men there is this virtue only,

namely, to be rich, but of the rest I wot there is no use. Nay, then 'tis right that all should lay up this maxim, *that wealth has the most power among all.*"

And now another poet's voice from the second half of the sixth century, the drink-loving and life-loving Anacreon :

" What avails ingenuous worth,  
Sprightly wit or noble birth?  
All these virtues useless prove,  
Gold alone engages love.  
May he be completely cursed  
Who the sleeping mischief first  
Wak'd to life :  
Gold creates in brethren strife,  
Gold destroys the parent's life ;  
Gold produces civil jars,  
Murders, massacres and wars.  
But the worst effect of gold,  
Love, alas, is bought and sold."

The social ferment which set in at the end of the eighth century became stronger during the following century. The mass of the people, or the *Demos*, to use the Greek expression, which consisted of enslaved peasants, handicraftsmen, tradespeople and sailors, had not yet forgotten the old equality, which the poets had celebrated as the Golden Age. In periods of great dearth they revolted

against the land and money lords; struggles of classes and parties broke out, which closely occupied the statesmen and thinkers of the Ionians and Dorians. While in Athens much preliminary discussion and philosophising was taking place, and some moderate reforms were carried out, the Spartans went to work early, and accomplished a communist revolution.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PRACTICE OF COMMUNISM IN SPARTA


#### (I) *The Lycurgian Legislation.*

THE conception of primitive equality persisted in a far stronger form and for a much longer period amongst the Dorians than amongst the Ionians. The cause of this difference may be sought in the fact that the Dorian settlements were of an agricultural nature, and neglected trade and sea-faring. Thus, in their case there were lacking two important factors, which hastened everywhere the process of dissolution of primitive conditions.

The first legislator, to whom tradition has ascribed the work of the communistic revolution, was Lycurgus. He is a legendary figure, somewhat like Moses among the Hebrews. Plutarch (born A.D. 50), to whom the whole of the literary sources of Greek and Roman history was accessible, wrote as follows: "Generally speaking, nothing can



be said with certainty respecting the legislator Lycurgus, as the historians differ considerably among themselves as to his origin, his journeys and his death; there is least unanimity as to the period in which this man lived." Lycurgus was remembered by the Spartans as a wise, gentle and unselfish lawgiver, who transformed the whole economic order by a political reform, and firmly established communism.

"The second and boldest innovation of Lycurgus," says Plutarch, "was a new division of the lands. For he found a prodigious  inequality, the city overcharged with many indigent persons who had no land, and the wealth centred in the hands of a few. Determined, therefore, to root out the evils of insolence, envy, avarice and luxury, and those distempers of a State still more inveterate and fatal—I mean poverty and riches—he persuaded the citizens to cancel all former divisions of land and to make new ones, in such a manner that they might be perfectly equal in their possessions and way of living. Hence, if they were impatient of distinction, they might seek it in virtue, as no other difference was left between them but that which arises from the dishonour of base actions and the praise of good ones."

It is hardly credible that the owners acquiesced in the surrender of their lands only and solely through the persuasion of Lycurgus. A more potent influence was the fact that the poor and needy comprised a great multitude, whilst wealth was concentrated in a few hands, and the Spartans were really Spartans, who knew the use of arms. Anyhow, the rich were constrained to assent to the institution of communism. The proposal was put into practice. Lycurgus made 9000 lots for the territory of Sparta, which he distributed among so many citizens, and 30,000 for the inhabitants of the rest of Laconia.

A story goes of our legislator that some time after, returning from a journey through the fields just harvested, and seeing the shocks standing parallel and equal, he smiled and said to some that were by, "How like is Laconia to an estate newly divided among many brothers." After this, he attempted to divide also the movables, but he soon perceived that the people could not bear to have their goods directly taken from them, and therefore took another method, counteracting their avarice by a stratagem. First, he stopped the currency of the gold and silver coin, and ordered that they should make use of iron

money only, then to a great quantity and heavy weight of this he assigned but a small value, so that to lay up 10 minæ (£31 10s.) a whole room was required, and to remove it nothing less than a yoke of oxen. When this became current, many kinds of injustices ceased in Laconia. Who would steal or take a bribe, who would defraud or rob when he could not conceal the booty, or be dignified by the possession of it? In the next place he excluded unprofitable and superfluous arts. Trade and shipping ceased. Meals were simple and taken in common; they consisted of the famous black soup, bread, cheese, wine, figs and vegetables, sometimes of game or other meat. Eating in common was the strict obligation of every citizen. Even the children were admitted to these meals, in order to learn from the talk of the adults.

“As for the education of youth,” says Plutarch, “Lycurgus began with it at the very source, taking into consideration their conception and birth by regulating the marriages. He ordered the virgins to exercise themselves in running, wrestling, and throwing quoits and darts. In order to take away the excessive tenderness and delicacy of the sex, he

accustomed the virgins occasionally to be seen naked as well as the young men, and to dance and sing in their presence on certain festivals. As for the virgins appearing naked, there was nothing disgraceful in it, because everything was conducted with modesty and without one indecent word or action. Nay, it caused a simplicity of manners and an emulation for the best development of the body, since the female sex was not excluded from sharing, with the male sex, the deeds of bravery and honour. Lycurgus established a proper regard to modesty and decorum with respect to marriage, but he was equally studious to drive from that state the vain and womanish passion of jealousy by making it quite respectable to have children in common with persons of merit." The healthy children were designed for nurture and education, but the sickly ones were cast aside. The chief aim of education was to furnish the State with strong, active and fearless fighters, to imbue the latter with an unshakable sense of their solidarity—in short, to produce men of action, and not chatterers. "In general, Lycurgus so regulated his citizens that they neither knew nor desired a separate private life, but, like bees, they acted with one impulse for the

public good, and always assembled about their chief. They were possessed with a thirst of honour, an enthusiasm which made them forget their individual feelings, and had no wish but for their country."

This communistic and military constitution enabled the Spartans to retain their supremacy in Peloponnesia, and, finally, to defeat even the Athenians (404 B.C.) and compel them to capitulate. The Spartan State appeared even to the greatest minds of Greece, such as Plato and Antisthenes, as the fixed pole in the whirlpool of the Hellenic States. Antisthenes, a disciple of Socrates, said, "Sparta is far above all other States, and, in comparison with Athens, it is like a meeting of men contrasted with a chattering of women in a boudoir." The Lycurgian constitution was generally famous throughout antiquity as far as the sphere of Hellenic civilisation extended. It became the ideal of many thinkers, including perhaps the leaders of the slave revolts in the Roman Empire.

But we, who possess to-day such immeasurably richer experience of political questions, must consider the Lycurgian State to have been very one-sided. It was aristocratic and



warlike; it was based on the productive labour of the helots—a multitude of enslaved people who formed the means for production, and belonged as common property to the entire State. In this respect the Spartans deprived themselves of one of the most fruitful elements of human growth—productive labour. Their communism consisted only in having and enjoying goods in common, and not in communist production. Strictly speaking, it was not an educational force, but a discipline imposed by the ruler and the warrior.

The entire absence of democracy, which might, to some degree, have curbed the rulers, as well as the neglect of philosophy and the arts, which might have elevated the intellectual life, and finally the constant pre-occupation with gymnastic and military exercises, made the Spartans aggressive and warlike as neighbours, and heartless as rulers of the wealth-creating helots. In order to protect themselves from the revolts of the oppressed and exploited class, such as the rebellion which broke out in the year 464, the Spartans organised massacres among the helots, from time to time, with the object of removing

the most courageous and capable of them. The morality which Lycurgus had impressed upon his fellow-citizens was a purely local and State morality, and in no sense spiritual and humanitarian. In any case, these conditions were bound to create a splendid race of men and women; and they would have produced intellectually outstanding men, if the mind and the character had been developed as much as the body. When, in the third century, many Spartan nobles came under the influence of the Ionian philosophy and the social ethics of the Stoics, their intellectual natures grew to heroic proportions. The first martyr of communism was a Spartan.

(2) *Agis, the first Communist Martyr.*

In the course of centuries war and exploitation undermined the Spartan communism. The victorious participation of Sparta in the liberation wars of the Ionians against the Persians (494-479), as well as the struggle for supremacy in Greece, which ensued forty years later, followed by the Peloponnesian War (431-404) and succeeding wars up to the year 371, brought to the Spartans much

glory, much gold and silver, but also catastrophic defeats and internal disruption, and swept away all the institutions that were bound up with the Lycurgian legislation.

Plutarch relates: "The first symptoms of corruption and distempers in their commonwealth appeared at the time when the Spartans had entirely destroyed the Athenian power, and begun to bring gold and silver into Lacedemonia. When the love of money made its way into Sparta, and brought avarice and meanness in its train, on the one hand, on the other profusion, effeminacy and luxury, that State soon deviated from its original virtue, and sank into contempt till the reign of Agis and Leonidas. Men of fortune now extended their landed estates without bounds, not scrupling to exclude the right heirs, and property quickly coming into a few hands, the rest of the people were poor and miserable. There remained not above 700 of the old Spartan families, of which perhaps 100 had estates in land. The rest of the city was filled with an insignificant rabble without property or honour, who had neither heart nor spirit to defend their country against wars abroad, and who were

always watching an opportunity for changes and revolutions at home."

Agis was of the royal house, and belonged to one of the richest families in Sparta. By all indications he was familiar with the Stoic philosophy, and was distinguished by great intellectual gifts and high-mindedness. Although at that time he was not yet twenty years old, and had been pampered and nurtured in luxury by his mother, Agistrata, and his grandmother, Archidamia, he renounced all enjoyment and returned to the old Spartan simplicity, or, as the Stoics said, to nature. Agis also declared that the kingly dignity mattered nothing to him, if it would not permit him to restore the old laws and the primitive institutions. The young people welcomed his ideas, while the old men and the women opposed him. Even his own family were against the proposed reform, but he gained their support by convincing his mother that the proposal was practicable, and would prove to be to the advantage of the State. He states, "It is impossible for me ever to vie with other kings in point of opulence. But if by sobriety, by simplicity of provisions for the body, and by greatness of mind I can do

something which shall far exceed all their pomp and luxury—I mean the making an equal partition of property among all the citizens—I shall really become a great king, and have all the honour that such actions demand.” His mother and his grandmother were won over to the plan of reform. Agis then proceeded to put it into practice. According to the Spartan constitution, two kings stood at the head of the country, and were controlled by five Ephors (supervisory officials, chosen by the noblest families), having the decisive voice in the case of difference of opinion between the two kings. Projects of law were laid before the Senate, and then remitted to the People’s Assembly, which decided their fate. Agis expounded his legislative proposals before the Senate, namely that all debts should be forgiven the debtors and the whole of the land be divided afresh into 19,500 equal portions: 4,500 among the native Spartans, men and women, and 15,000 among the Periokia (descendants of the pre-Dorian population) and such foreigners as were fitted by their physical and mental qualities to be assimilated into the polity of Sparta. All the people were to be divided



into groups for common meals, and to revert to the modes of life of old Sparta.

The Senate was unable to agree upon this legislative proposal, whereupon one of the Ephors, who was in accord with Agis, brought the matter before the People's Assembly, and spoke against the unwilling Senators. After some discussion, Agis himself spoke and informed the People's representatives that he would contribute largely to the institution which he recommended. He would first give up to the community his own great estate, consisting of arable and pasture land, and of 600 talents in money. Then his mother and grandmother and all his relations and friends, who were the richest persons in Sparta, would follow his example. The People's representatives were delighted with the magnanimity of Agis, but his co-regent Leonidas spoke against the plan, especially as regards the release from debts and the admittance of foreigners. Agis replied, and the people declared for his proposed law, but there was considerable opposition among the Ephors and in the Senate, which found a determined leader in Leonidas. The latter, however, could await his opportunity. In order to be

safe from attack, Agis sought refuge in the temple of Neptune, which he left only to bathe. Leonidas, who had surrounded himself with a posse of soldiers, organised the attack on Agis. When the latter chanced to find himself outside the temple, three warriors approached him, overpowered him and cast him into prison. Leonidas immediately appeared with a troop of soldiers and occupied the building. The Ephors and some Senators then entered the prison, formed a tribunal, and endeavoured by various means to induce Agis to abandon his plans. When, however, he assured them that he felt no repentance and could retract nothing, as the Lycurgian constitution was the best, they condemned him to death by hanging. The request of his mother and grandmother, to bring him before a proper tribunal, and to conduct the proceedings in public, was refused by the Ephors, as they were aware of the popularity of the prisoner. On the same grounds they hastened the execution. Immediately after sentence had been pronounced, Agis was conducted to the place of execution. On the way he noticed one of the servants who was weeping and lamenting, and said to him,

"My friend, dry up your tears, for as I suffer innocently, I am in a better condition than those who condemn me, contrary to law and justice." So saying, he cheerfully offered his neck to the executioner. Afterwards, both his grandmother and mother, Agistrata, were executed. When Agistrata, on reaching the place of execution, saw her son lying dead on the ground, and her mother hanging from the rope, with the help of an attendant she took down the latter and laid her by the side of Agis. Then she threw herself on her son, and kissed his face, saying, "Thy too great gentleness, my son, thy mercy and humanity have brought misfortune on thee and us." Then she placed herself on the gallows, and cried, "May this but promote the welfare of Sparta." These events took place 240 B.C.

### 3. *The Reforms of Cleomenes.*

Five years after the execution of Agis, Cleomenes (235-222 B.C.), the son of Leonidas, became ruler. He had married the widow of Agis, and had thoroughly mastered the reform proposals of the latter. He then decided to put them into practice. But he

was more warlike than Agis, being a genuine Spartan, who perceived in the might of his army, in battle and victory, the best means to his end. He believed that only as a victorious captain could he obtain sufficient authority in the State to be able to remove the anti-communists, the Ephors, and the rich. An opportunity soon offered itself to invade a neighbouring State, and to win a triumph, which, however, developed into a series of wars. After his first victory, Cleomenes interfered with the Spartan constitution, and abolished the position of Ephors; then he banished eighty citizens who were hostile to reform, and convoked a general assembly of the people, before which he justified his conduct. He accused the Ephors of usurping an ever larger measure of power, contrary to the spirit of the constitution, and of secretly setting up their own tribunal. Further, they had banished or executed those kings who desired to see the excellent and admirable institutions of Lycurgus restored. It had therefore become necessary to put the Ephors out of the way. Cleomenes then continued: "Had I been able, without bloodshed, to banish from Lacedemonia the diseases and

crimes, luxury, love of splendour, debts and usury, and the far more considerable evils of riches and poverty, which have insinuated themselves into our State, I should have considered myself the most fortunate of all kings. I have, however, made the most temperate use of the force at my disposal, by merely removing those who stood in the way of the welfare of Lacedemonia. Among all the rest I will now divide equally the whole of the land; the debtors will be forgiven their debts, a selection will be made of the foreigners so that only the bravest shall become Spartans and help to defend the town, that we may no longer see Lacedemonia fall a prey to the Ætolians and the Illyrians for lack of defenders." Having said this, he placed his possessions at the disposal of the people. His example was followed by his kinsmen and friends, and then by all the remainder of the citizens. The land was partitioned, a portion even being allotted to the banished citizens, and Cleomenes promised that they would all be permitted to return as soon as the State settled down again. He restored the old Spartan simplicity of life, and proceeded himself to set a good example.



Had the foreign policy of Cleomenes henceforth been of a peaceful character, Sparta would once more have become a model, and the other Hellenic States would have been obliged to introduce the Spartan social reforms. But the warlike policy which he pursued made enemies of his neighbours.

Instead of love, the social reforms of Sparta inspired fear. In their need, the neighbouring States appealed to the Macedonians, in order to be able to ward off the Spartan attack. For several years Cleomenes, with his trusty army, was able, single-handed, to hold the coalition at bay, and to defeat it, but finally he succumbed.

Plutarch gives the following account of the course of the war :

“ Cleomenes not only inspired in his citizens courage and confidence, but even by the enemy he was considered an excellent general. With the force of a single town to withstand both the might of the Macedonians and the united Peloponnesians, and not only to protect Lacedemonia against every attack, but also to overrun the country of the enemy, and to capture such large towns—these deeds seemed to betray unusual skilfulness and

magnanimity. Whoever first called money the nerve of all things in the world may well have said this in special reference to the war. . . . As the Macedonians were amply provided with all requisite accessories to carry on the war permanently, they were bound eventually to be victorious and to humble Cleomenes, who could only, with great efforts, pay his soldiers and provide support for his citizens."

When Cleomenes was at length defeated (222 B.C., at Sellasia) he advised the citizens of Sparta to open the door to Antigonos, the king of Macedonia. The latter took possession of the town, but treated the Lacedemonians with great clemency and humanity. Without injuring or insulting the dignity of Sparta, he gave them back their laws and constitution, that is, the old laws which were in force before the reigns of Agis and Cleomenes, the non-communist laws.

#### 4. *Communistic Settlement in Lipara.*

It is related by the Sicilian author, Diodorus, that about the year 580 several Knidians and Rhodians decided to leave their homes, as

they were discontented with the oppressive rule of the Lydian kings. They sailed towards the west, and when they landed at Lipara (an island near Sicily) they were received in a friendly manner by the inhabitants, and were persuaded by the latter to join them in forming a community. Later on, when they were hard pressed by pirates from Tyre, they constructed a fleet and divided themselves in such a way that a number of them tilled the other island, as a common undertaking, whilst the others protected them from the pirates. All property was declared to be held in common, and the settlers also practised the eating of meals in common. This communal mode of living lasted for some time. Afterwards, the settlers divided the island of Lipara, on which the town was situated, among themselves, and cultivated the other island on the communal principle. At length both the islands were partitioned for a period of twenty years, and at the expiration of this term property was divided again.

The institution of communal meals was also to be found in Crete. Numerous citizens of Crete were provided with repasts out of public funds. Plato believed that the

communal meals were established with the object of keeping the citizens in military trim, or to protect them from want. He considered the practice to be a divine necessity (*Laws*, Book VI. chap. 21), and an institution of the ideal State.

## CHAPTER IV

### COMMUNISTIC THEORIES IN ATHENS

#### I. *Solon's Middle-Class Reforms.*

AT the time when Sparta became a communistic State, the nobles ruled in Attica, and gradually deprived the peasants of their rights and property, enslaving them by the operation of usury. The priests and the judges were recruited from the ranks of the ruling nobility. The producing class therefore became discontented. The economic, political and judicial iniquities led to conspiracies which were suppressed with bloodshed. In response to the demand of the people for a code of laws, the nobles charged the juriconsult, Draco, to compile a code of laws, which have become proverbial for their severity. Since that time a Draconian law has signified a harsh, unpopular measure. It goes without saying that this was not the way to promote internal peace. The people became ever more clamorous in their demands for emancipation from the burden of debts



and a fresh partition of the soil. As Attica, at the beginning of the sixth century, was on the eve of a popular rising, in the year 594 the nobles ordered Solon, who was known to be a friend of the people, "to establish peace between the nobles and the people, and to take all legal measures that might be necessary to this end." Thereupon, Solon carried out an economic and political reform. All debts secured upon land (mortgages) were cancelled, and enslavement was forbidden. This reform is known by the name of *Seisachteia* (throwing-off of debts). The political constitution was a timocracy; it was based upon a census which divided the citizens into four classes, according to the revenue from their landed property: (1) large landowners, (2) knights, (3) peasants, (4) day labourers. The members of the first class were eligible to hold the highest offices; those of the second and third classes were eligible for the rest of the State positions, while those of the fourth class could only participate in the popular assemblies and the juries. On the other hand, they were excused the payment of State taxes.

Solon's constitution, however, satisfied

neither the nobles nor the people. The former thought it too revolutionary; the latter deemed it to be inadequate. After a long period of internal and external confusion political equality or "democracy" was founded by Cleisthenes at the end of the sixth century (509), but it was also based on slavery. There could be no thought of a real democracy, in which all the citizens had equal rights. Soon after this Athens entered upon the period of the Persian War (500 to 431), in the course of which it developed a victorious navy, and gained great commercial prosperity. In conjunction with the land power of Sparta, it defeated the Persians, and, from a small State, grew into a league of States, in which industry, trade, maritime commerce, mental culture, poetry and art flourished. But hard upon Capitalism followed Imperialism (the contest for supremacy in the Hellenic world), the struggle of classes, and the dissolution of Attic society into individuals striving against each other.

## 2. *Capitalism and Disintegration.*

The Attic Empire, with its sea power, its foreign trade, and its industrial undertakings,

was quite different from the small State for which the reforming laws of Solon had been enacted. Agriculture, which even at the beginning of the sixth century had not sufficed to sustain the population, was transformed in accordance with the mercantile point of view. Wide tracts of land were given over to the culture of olives, as oil had become a profitable commodity for export. The population became dependent upon foreign corn, which was brought by ships from the northern coasts of the Black Sea into the Attic harbours, especially to Piræus. From that district cattle, fish, wood, flax, hemp and salt were also imported. The handicraftsmen were transferred to the factories, and worked for the export trade. In this way they fell into dependence upon trading capital. And in the degree that commodities lost their local origin, and were to be got only through the large trader and the shipper, the shopkeepers and the small business people forfeited their independence. It goes without saying that capital secured the lion's share of the profits. "Aristocratic persons consequently became great merchants and shippers, the landowners became capitalists, and lived on their rents,

transferring their agricultural undertakings to managers, who carried them on with the help of slaves " (E. Mayer, *History of Antiquity*).

Henceforth, the free workers had to struggle against both the domination of capital and the tendency of slave-labour to depress wages ; the small middle-class fell ever more into subjection. Consequently, the Demos waged desperate and bitter struggle against the rich, and in the interval the life of Attica was severely shaken, and statesmen watched with growing anxiety the disruption of their country. The social and moral crisis was accentuated by the Peloponnesian War, which broke out in the year 431, partly in consequence of the maritime competition between Corinth and Athens, and partly because of the struggle between Attica and Sparta for supremacy in Hellas, and ended with the collapse and surrender of Athens in the year 404.

### 3. *Plato.*

Plato had these conditions in mind when he constructed the theoretical basis of a just State. He was born three years after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, and

sprang from one of the noblest families of Athens. One of his ancestors in the female line was Solon. After he had been taught by Socrates, he proceeded to Egypt and Italy in order to continue his studies. By temperament and inclination he would have devoted himself to public work, but the times were anything but favourable for statesmen of the mental calibre of Plato. He turned to philosophy, and became the most famous teacher of the Hellenic world and one of the greatest thinkers of all time.

Plato was no supporter of Democracy. An out-and-out intellectual aristocrat, the thoughtless multitude, the prey of demagogues, was as obnoxious to him as the plutocracy and every kind of forcible rule. His most important sociological works are the *Republic* and the *Laws*. The first book is the more ideal in its proposals, but it is not nearly as well constructed as the *Laws*, which in many respects is more readable than the *Republic*, of whose ten books only the fifth, sixth and eighth are valuable. Both works are written in conversational style; the dialogues are by no means ingenious, but mechanical and often pedantic.



(1) The *Republic* is not the description of an Utopia. It contains no picture of a future State, and certainly not the economic basis of a socialist society. It is rather an investigation into the justice and the shortcomings of the various constitutions known to history, and the most important remedies for a diseased body politic. Plato's concept of righteousness had almost nothing in common with that of the Jewish prophets. The Hellene is above all a statesman—cool and cautious—a clear-headed patriot. He would not be likely to lead in a class struggle the poor and disinherited, and obtain justice for them, or to elevate the poor and overthrow the rich. He does not reveal a trace of prophetic vehemence, nor any hint of internationalism. He is rather anxious to bring healing to his disrupted country, and to make of it a State in which social peace and concord shall prevail, and in which every citizen shall go about his own business without interfering with the concerns of his neighbour.

Plato takes as his starting-point the notion that an ideal State originally existed. He does not describe it in the *Republic*, but refers to the testimony of Hesiod.

In a somewhat mystical manner he argues that mankind from generation to generation has deteriorated in excellence and fallen into dissensions. Many have striven after the acquisition of money and the possession of land, houses, gold and silver coins. A war of all against all arose, and at length men reached an agreement to distribute the land and houses among themselves. Private property was introduced, and the population was divided into rulers and menials (Book VIII. chap. 3). In another place Plato proceeds on psychological lines, and seeks to explain the origin and development of the State according to the nature of the human mind and the needs of men (Book II. chaps. 10, 11). As an isolated individual man requires help, he can satisfy his physical needs only in co-operation with others. Therefore, men associate with one another and form a State. Each citizen has his occupation—many are tillers of the soil, others are handworkers, and they barter their products with one another. Thus trade and money come into existence. Soon men cease to be contented with the satisfaction of their mere necessities, and require articles of luxury. Ostentation and debauchery

appear, and lead to covetousness and to wars of conquest, which involve the creation of military power. The State becomes more complex. Riches and poverty come into being. The inner harmony disappears; the State splits into two hostile groups. "Even the smallest town is divided into two; one part is the city of the poor, the other the city of the rich, both at war with each other" (Book IV, chap. 2). With the growth of riches and poverty the State becomes impotent. The rich neglect their duties, and the poor perform inferior work, and where riches are honoured the citizens forget all virtue and strive after wealth. The rich become licentious, the poor servile and rebellious, and the interest of the State is neglected by all. The State goes under. For, finally, things go so far that one half of the population rejoices over incidents that plunge the other half into sorrow. These evils are to be found in a timocracy (Solon's four-class constitution) and in an oligarchy (rule by a small number of property owners), in a democracy and in a tyranny (Book VIII. chaps. 3-12). All these constitutions are based on private property.

The timocracy contained, however, many

vestiges of the ideal State, such as good rulers and the communal meals of the citizens. It is succeeded by an oligarchy, in which the quest of profit and the acquisition of money get the upper hand, so that wealth becomes the measure of citizenship. Such a State despises the love of wisdom, and all virtues are supplanted by the greed for money. And if the insatiability of the rich has for its consequence the poverty of the mass, the struggle of parties—on the slightest outside pressure—leads to the triumph of the disinherited, and to democracy, in which both groups lose their sense of duty to the State. Finally, things come to a tyranny, or the forcible rule of an individual, who begins by flattering the masses in order to subjugate them.

These constitutions and laws do not admit of any amendment. Most amusing are those people who are always setting up legal restrictions and putting forward amendments, under the delusion that they can control the march of events, and such trifles as we have just described, not once suspecting that they are really trying to cut off the heads of a hydra (Book IV. chaps. 4, 5).

Thus the State cannot be reformed unless

it strikes out in a new direction, and adopts another constitution under other rulers—that is, renews itself.

How is the State to be renewed? How is national policy to be based on righteousness? To these questions Plato makes the famous answer :

“ Until either the philosophers shall be made kings in States, or those who are now called kings and potentates shall attain to the fulness of true philosophy, and until this union of political power in the same person is effected, no relief will be possible for cities, nor for the entire human race ” (Book V. chap. 18).

The philosopher kings are to guide the people; they will be the guardians of the State. They are to be assisted by officials and warriors, who likewise will be superior intellectually and morally to the multitude.

Thorough-going communism is equally important, or, as Plato says : “ It is then a matter upon which we are all agreed, that in a State which aims at perfection wives and children must be in common, and that all education, and in like manner the pursuits of war and peace, are to be common, and those of



the citizens are to be kings who have proved themselves best as philosophers and warriors " (Book VIII. chap. 1). Communism will put an end to dissensions within the State. " Does not community of pleasure and pain tend to unite a State, when all the citizens, as far as possible, rejoice and grieve equally at the same events, happy or untoward? On the other hand, does not isolation in this matter tend to divide a State? Whence then does this division come about, unless it be when the citizens do not, on the same occasion, unite in saying: 'This is mine, this is not mine, this is foreign to me'? "

The chief thing, however, is education. General compulsory instruction will result in a careful selection. The future rulers (guardians), officials and assistants are to be carefully trained in gymnastics and music. Above all the supreme guardians, the philosopher kings. The most promising scholars, who by their activity and achievements shall seem to be worthy stations, are to continue learning until they reach the age of fifty years, and distinguish themselves in every branch of knowledge and all political actions. Only then will they be enabled

to lift up their eyes and behold the idea of the good. In the Platonic sense the idea is not an intellectual, logical concept, but some lofty reality, an eternal, heavenly pattern, which only the most spiritual vision can perceive and reconstruct on earth. "Our State will then be perfectly ordered when it has a ruler who possesses all this knowledge" (Book VI. chap. 17).

The children of handworkers, labourers, etc., are not capable of reaching this plane of spirituality. For the great multitude enjoyment consists in the pleasures of the senses, and not of the mind. The multitude is broken in body as well as crushed in soul by its exhausting industrial occupations. Plato is avowedly of opinion that only the most considerable families, with political, scientific and æsthetic culture, will be likely to produce traits which, after careful cultivation, will qualify them for the highest posts.

(2) The *Laws* are not so idealistic as the *Republic*. They were written at a later date than the latter. The criticism of the property relations is indeed as acute as formerly, but the definite communist proposals are more tentative. It may be said that the *Republic*

is revolutionary, and that the *Laws* are reformist. Plato says (*Laws*, Book V.): "The first and highest form of the State and of the government and of the law is that in which there prevails most widely the ancient saying that '*friends have all things common.*' Whether there is anywhere now or will ever be this communism of women and children and of property, in which the private and individual is altogether banished from life, and things which are by nature private, such as eyes and ears and hands, have become common, and all men express praise and blame and feel joy and sorrow on the same occasions, and whatever laws there are unite the city to the utmost, happy are the men who living after this manner dwell there. And therefore to this we are to look for the pattern State, and to cling to this, and to seek with all our might for one which is like this. The State which we have now in mind will be nearest to immortality, and the only one which takes the second place." How can such a constitution be established? "Let the citizens at once distribute their land and houses and not till the land in common, since a community of goods goes beyond their

proposed origin and culture and education. But in making the distribution let the several possessors feel that their particular lots belong to the whole city."

The division of the land shall be equal, as far as possible. The number of original lots of land is not to be reduced, that is, care must be taken that neither large land-owners nor landless persons are created. In general the defects of the old government could only be avoided by "eradicating the lust for ownership, accompanied by righteousness" (Book V.). The possession of gold, or even of silver, is forbidden; there is to be only as much minted money as is required for daily exchange. In the case of marriage, dowries shall neither be given nor accepted. The reasonable statesman will not bother himself about the political ideas of the mob. The mob demands a State which shall be as great and rich as possible, have gold and silver in abundance, and possess the most extensive dominion over land and sea. They will perhaps demand, at the same time, that the State shall also be virtuous and happy. But both these demands together cannot be complied with. One can have either

wealth and power, or virtue and happiness. Wealth and virtue are never to be found together. "I can never assent to the doctrine that the rich man will be happy. A man who spends on noble objects and acquires wealth by just means only, can hardly be remarkable for riches, any more than he could be very poor. Our statement then is true that the very rich are not good" (Book V.). If the government be good, then no excessively rich people will exist in the State, and where there is no foolish wealth there will be no mean poverty, for the former creates the latter (Book V.).

Plato's legislation and proposals for reform relate to the Hellenes in general, and, so far as the formation of a ruling caste is concerned, to the noble class of Hellas. With Plato one may really speak of a Hellenist nation. This nation is to be as united and solid as possible in regard to property relations. On the other hand, it is to be classified in respect to intellectual and moral capacities. The intellectual and cultured nobles are to rule, to lead, and to make laws; the farmers and handworkers are to follow their pursuits dutifully, to avoid all pre-occupation, so that each of them



confines himself to his own calling, in which he can be proficient. Moreover, the Hellenes are not to undertake any heavy tasks of manual labour, or any mean services, but to leave these to immigrant foreigners and slaves. The Hellenes are to devote themselves to their duties as citizens, and the higher pursuits.

In the *Laws* Plato lays the chief emphasis on the removal of the sharp economic antagonisms; in the *Republic* he is principally occupied with the education and mode of living of the philosopher kings, the officials and the warriors. A superficial reading of the *Republic* gives the impression—which is, in fact, shared by many writers—that Plato recommends communism solely for these upper sections, and leaves the remaining class of the people in the old conditions. This interpretation, however, is wholly erroneous. From the quotations we have given above it is quite clear that Plato advocated communism for all Hellenes. Otherwise, there would be no point in the entire social criticism which he levels, in both his works, against the economic, political and moral conditions of his country.

Plato was an inspired Lycurgus; the latter was concerned only with his local State

(Sparta), whereas the former was for the Hellenic nation. The rest of the Hellenic States were as foreign to Lycurgus as any community in Asia or Africa. For Plato the Hellenic States collectively were only a constituent part of the Hellenic nation; in his eyes the Peloponnesian War was a civil war. Both legislators, however, were unable to conceive of a state of humanity without war, or an international brotherhood. For Plato those who were not Hellenes were barbarians, a lower species of mankind, for whom it were an honour and advantage to be ruled by the Hellenes. The Stoics were the first to spread among the Hellenes the idea of the equality of the human race.

#### 4. *Aristotle versus Plato and Phaleas.*

Aristotle was anti-communist and an opponent of the natural rights theory. His *Politics* is the work of an unusually prudent thinker, experienced in statecraft, a man who was averse from all revolutions, all extreme reforms, and even all violent party struggles. He regarded the establishment and maintenance of a balance of power in the State as the chief task of a statesman. The citizens in

the State must be neither too rich and powerful, nor too poor and weak, for the State is endangered by every disproportionate increase of riches and poverty, of influence and impotence (*Politics*, Book V., where revolutions and their causes are dealt with). Great inequality moves those who suffer from it to strive for an alteration of government, and demagogues quickly appear to give the watchword of rebellion to the discontented masses. Likewise, it causes the anti-social oligarchs to arrogate all the power to themselves, and consequently to alter the constitution. Legislators, therefore, should aim at preventing the accumulation of excessive wealth in a few hands, as well as the ascendancy of single persons. He did not believe that slavery was against nature, or that government was the consequence of the corruption of human nature.

From this description of the second greatest Greek philosopher it will easily be understood that he was an opponent of Plato, whose *Republic* and *Laws*, while not being prudent, contained much wisdom and idealism. Aristotle (*Politics*, Book II.) argues at great length against the communistic ideas of his

teacher, and displays great acuteness, but he indulges at times in mere hair-splitting and pedantic word-catching. None the less it is remarkable that Aristotle urged all the objections that have been raised against Socialism in all ages. In his opinion, communism was against human nature. It would be detrimental to the production of wealth, as each man only looks after himself, and furthers his own interest. The prospect of acquiring wealth is thus an incentive to creative labour. Likewise, communism ignores the increase of population; that which is a common concern does not promote concord, but leads to contention. Finally: the real source of evil is not private property, but the inferiority of human nature.

“Indeed we see that there is much more quarrelling among those who have all things in common, though there are not many of them when compared with the vast numbers who have private property.”

But eventually Aristotle comes to the conclusion: “The present arrangement (society based on private property), if improved as it might be by good customs and laws, would be far better and would have the

advantages of both systems. Property should be in a certain sense common, but as a general rule, private, for, when everyone has a distinct interest, men will not complain of one another, and they will make more progress, because everyone will be attending to his own business. And yet among the good, and in respect of use, '*Friends*,' as the proverb says, '*will have all things common*.' Even now there are traces of such a principle, showing that it is not impracticable, but, in well-ordered States, exists already to a certain extent, and may be carried further. For, although every man has his own property, some things he will place at the disposal of his friends, while of others he shares the use with them. The Lacedemonians, for example, use one another's slaves, and horses, and dogs, as if they were their own; and when they happen to be in the country, they appropriate in the fields whatever provisions they want. It is clearly better that property should be private, but the use of it common; and the special business of the legislator is to create in men this benevolent disposition" (II. 5).

This concession to communism on the part of Aristotle was without any special



significance. It merely constituted one of the measures for putting down excessive egoism.

There is little force in the example which he gives from Sparta, as in that country the citizens had become accustomed to a certain extent to communistic sentiments, through the Lycurgian legislation, whereas Aristotle rejected the principle underlying this legislation.

After attacking Plato, Aristotle proceeds to a criticism of the socialistic proposals of the otherwise unknown Phaleas, of whom he says :

“ In the opinion of some, the regulation of property is the chief point of all, that being the question upon which all revolutions turn. This danger was recognised by Phaleas of Chalcedon, who was the first to affirm that the citizens of a State ought to have equal possessions. He thought that in a new colony the equalisation might be accomplished without difficulty, not so easily when a State was already established ; and that then the shortest way of compassing the desired end would be for the rich to give and not to receive marriage portions, and for the poor not to give but to receive them ” (II. 7).

Aristotle objects :

“ It is not the possessions but the desires of mankind which require to be equalised, and this is impossible, unless a sufficient education is provided by the State. But Phaleas will probably reply that this is precisely what he means and that, in his opinion, there ought to be in States, not only equal property, but equal education. There are crimes of which the motive is want; and for these Phaleas expects to find a cure in the equalisation of property, which will take away from a man the temptation to be a highwayman because he is hungry or cold. But want is not the sole incentive to crime; men desire to gratify some passion which preys on them, or they are eager to enjoy the pleasures which are unaccompanied by pain, and therefore they commit crimes. Now what is the cure of these three disorders? Of the first, moderate possessions and occupation; of the second, habits of temperance; as to the third, if any desire pleasures which depend on themselves, they will find the satisfaction of their desires nowhere but in philosophy. The fact is that the greatest crimes are caused by excess and not by necessity.

Men do not become tyrants in order that they may not suffer cold; and hence great is the honour bestowed, not on him who kills a thief, but on him who kills a tyrant. Thus we see that the institutions of Phaleas avail only against petty crimes. . . . The beginning of reform—declares Aristotle further—is not so much to equalise property as to train the nobler sort of natures not to desire more, and to prevent the lower from getting more; that is to say, they must be kept down, but not ill-treated. Besides, the equalisation proposed by Phaleas is imperfect; for he only equalises land, whereas a man may be rich also in slaves and cattle and money, and in the abundance of what are called his movables. Now either all these things must be equalised, or some limit must be imposed on them, or they must all be let alone. It would appear that Phaleas is legislating for a small city only, if, as he supposes, all the artisans are to be public slaves and not to form a part of the population of the city" (II. 7).

It is apparent from this criticism that Phaleas' equality of possession in land tended towards general State education and the nationalisation of the handworkers. As it is

also said that he was the first who wrote upon equality of possessions, he must have lived even before Plato.

### 5. *The Poets of Social Comedy.*

Wit, irony and satire were among the most characteristic gifts of the Ionians, who were so richly endowed mentally. All these qualities were united in Aristophanes, a dramatic poet of magical power of form. He lived through the Peloponesian War, and witnessed its tragic end. He was familiar with the communistic sentiments which seized hold of the dispossessed classes during this war, and even after its termination. The Athenian catastrophe shook all authority, and all national cohesion. The Athenian Demos, feverishly groping after all that was new, yearned passionately for some communist transformation of society. This moral condition was prepared by the old traditions of the Golden Age, and by the social struggles since the eighth century. For these facts no direct evidence is forthcoming from the dispossessed classes, but there is plenty of indirect evidence, which is handed down to us in the social comedies of Pherekrates, Telekleides, Eupolis, and

especially Aristophanes. Of the works of the three first-named authors only fragments remain, but the best comedies of Aristophanes, the most famous of all, are preserved intact, and stand incomparably higher than the former. But they are still comedies; their purpose is to pour good-humoured mockery upon the communistic aspirations, by means of exaggeration and caricature, and also to chastise the plutocratic and imperialistic appetites. Their authors were conservative in their outlook, and ridiculed or deplored subversive movements. It should be added that antique communism regarded productive labour as a curse. Its aim was not the establishment of an empire of creative labour, as at that time labour was synonymous with slavery. Tools were extremely primitive; mechanical power did not yet exist; the hard work was performed by the unfree, and was consequently held to be degrading.

War and politics were regarded as the special functions of the free citizens. This signified that the free citizens formed a ruling class, and not a democracy. We saw this to be the case when we dealt with the Platonic State. Free and impoverished citizens conceived their



salvation to be found in the emancipation from physical labour. Consequently, their communism often took the shape of desires for a sluggard's paradise. The more I have studied the life of antiquity, the clearer it has become to me that the moral and political collapse of the old world was due chiefly to slavery—in short, to unfree labour, to the despising of productive activity, and the resultant stagnation of the technology of labour. The social comedies which we are to deal with now are directed against the dreams of idleness, the desires for an opulent life without toil, which the Athenians cherished, and which became more urgent with the relaxation which followed upon the catastrophic defeat of Athens in the year 404.

Let us take first Phereakrates, Telekleides and Eupolis, as they preceded Aristophanes in point of time, and were also less important. These authors attacked the sluggard dreams of the discontented Athenians, hungering for innovations, as well as the exaggerated accounts of the Golden Age. The most typical of the comedies of Phereakrates was the *Persians*. The Greeks looked upon Persia as a land of golden mountains, the possession

of which would facilitate the realisation of their sluggard's ideal. Two figures appear : riches and poverty. The latter exhorts mankind to labour and self-control as the sources of all blessings. The embodiment of riches makes reply :

“What do we want with all your science of yoked oxen and ploughs, of sowing and mowing and hedging? You have already heard that steaming broth flows through the streets, and lard and fine dumplings are conveyed to us from the sources of wealth. Who likes may fill his dish to the brim. And all the trees on the hillsides will not bear leaves, but sausages and tender baked thrushes.”

Eupolis describes in the *Golden Age* the restoration of the old vanished happiness. The theme is similar to the *Persians* of Phereakrates. Two speakers appear; one defends the utility of poverty and abstinence as incentive and means to the attainment of happiness, while the other defends the beauty of wealthy idleness :

“Listen now to me : I will, on the contrary, introduce into the warm baths of my friends water from the sea, by means of conduits supported on pillars. Thus it will flow

into everyone's tub. When it is full, he will say, 'Stop.' "

In a similar fashion Telekleides, in his comedy, *Amphyktyonen*, ridiculed the sluggard's dreams of the Hellenic proletariat and slaves. *Amphyktyon*, an ancient legendary king of Athens, comes back to the upper world, and brings peace and happiness to his fellow-citizens :

" Above all, peace reigned in the land every day, like air and water. The earth did not yield fear nor sorrow, but good things in abundance. Purple wine foamed in the brooks. Fishes followed men into their houses, fried themselves on the pans, and laid themselves on the table, and mounted the splendid plates. Soup streamed through the town, and roasted legs of mutton danced ; sauce trickles down from the eaves ; the hungry may tarry awhile and fill themselves with good things. Lard cakes are despised. And the men were a strong race, like giants sprung from the earth."

#### 6. *Aristophanes.*

Aristophanes was of quite a different calibre. With a sure touch he penetrated into the entire

life of Athens, showed us meetings, political struggles, economic aspirations, plutocratic ambition, and a women's parliament manufacturing Utopias. The whole dimensions of the almost unique Ionian genius, but also the defects of ancient civilisation, appear before our eyes, sketched by one who was an intellectual aristocrat, who had no sympathy at all, either for the turbulent economic and cosmopolitan activity of the plutocracy, or for the strivings of the dispossessed for extreme equality. The ideal of Aristophanes seems to have been similar to that of Aristotle. From this opposition to his age arose the satire, the deliberate mockery, the graceful irony which characterise his comedies. Of all the comedies of Aristophanes, which treat satirically the cosmopolitan capitalist politicians, the Sophists, the mania for law-suits, the cloud cuckoo town, and the communists, we are here only concerned with the *Ecclesiazuses* (the Parliament of Women, played 393) and *Plutos* (played 388).

The contents of the first may be summarised as follows: the politics of the men has led to the collapse of the flourishing Athenian Republic: the Peloponnesian War ended (404)

with the complete capitulation of Athens. The women had suffered much during the long war, and their lot was rendered worse by the deplorable consequences of the collapse. They resolved therefore to depose the men as the ruling sex, and to take the reins of government into their own hands.

In the night the women steal away from their husbands, dress themselves as men and summon a Parliament where female orators appear and make proposals for the complete reform of the country. Women, they say, are economically more efficient and circumspect than men, and will be able to steer the State into the proper course and to maintain it. The leader of this revolution was named *Praxagora* and her husband's name was *Blepyros*. A debate arose between the two. The woman said: "I beg for order and attention. Nobody is to interrupt me until I have finished my speech. I have weighed and considered the trend of my scheme. The principle which I want to see applied is: all ought to be equal, all ought to enjoy wealth and pleasures on an equal footing. It should no longer be tolerated that one is rich, and another poor; that one possesses broad lands,



and another not sufficient to enable him to have his own tomb; that one has a hundred servants, and another none at all. I intend to improve and reform all this. All ought to participate freely and equally in the blessings; one mode of life, one system for all mankind.

*Blepyros*: And how will you make all this come to pass? *Praxagora*: First of all, steps

are to be taken to transfer to the possession of the whole of society all silver, all pieces of land and other kinds of property; this will constitute a public fund; out of this fund we will, as good housewives, feed you men, clothe and look after you. *Blepyros*: As far as the land is concerned, I understand your proposal, as land cannot be concealed. But how are you going to socialise gold and silver?

*Praxagora*: Everybody will be obliged to bring their property into the treasury house.

*Blepyros*: Suppose the rich should hold things back; they cannot be made to comply by means of an oath, for they will even perjure themselves and deceive the State. How otherwise have they acquired their wealth?

*Praxagora*: Agreed; but their property will immediately become useless on their hands, for want will exist no longer; everybody will

be able to have what he may desire, even without money : nuts, chestnuts, bread, clothing, wine, flowers, fish. All these things may be taken from the public stores. What would be the object, then, of accumulating money in private hands? Why should the rich want to retain any longer the property acquired by fraud? *Blepyros* : Do you know that the people who own the most property are the greatest rascals and cannot refrain from stealing and lying? *Praxagora* : All this is quite true when we look at the past ; under the old order, which we are now abolishing, this was really the case. But what is the use of private property now that everything is common? *Blepyros* : Suppose a young man courts a maiden, or desires a woman, he will have to bring presents? *Praxagora* : Not at all : all women and men will be free and in common ; marriage or other compulsion will not exist. *Blepyros* : But what will happen when a beautiful girl is courted by several men, some handsome and some ugly? *Praxagora* : Of course, a beautiful girl will have many suitors, some handsome and some ugly, but before one is justified in courting a beautiful girl he will have to sleep with an ugly girl. *Blepyros* :

Good. The girls will no longer have to fear that they will remain old maidens all their lives? But what will happen to the men? It may be assumed that the maidens will grant their favours only to the handsome men. How will the ugly men get on? *Praxagora* : The State will regulate the amorous lives of the maidens. By the side of the young, handsome and well-developed men will be ranged the small, misshapen and undersized men. And before the maidens receive permission to pair off with their lovers, they will be obliged to grant their love to the men who have been treated by nature in a step-motherly manner. All prostitution will be abolished; the degraded women will be left to the slaves, so that the most vigorous men shall be reserved for the citizenesses. *Blepyros* : How shall we be able to know our children? *Praxagora* : They will never be recognised. All children will belong to all adults. *Blepyros* : And who will do the work of the community? *Praxagora* : The slaves will attend to this work."

The debate is continued, and Praxagora sketches the future State, in which all things will be in common, and all will be free and equal and independent; in which all private

undertakings will be amalgamated into one great single property, in which all class distinctions, all restrictions and all measures of constraint will be abolished for ever. Likewise there will be no more courts of justice and election halls. These will be transformed into dining halls, where the finest dainties may be had. In alphabetical order the citizens will be assigned their dining numbers, and their dining halls. Common meals will be invested with solemnity; in an elevated frame of mind each person will leave them, with torch in hand, and a floral crown in the hair, and when they then wander through the streets, girls and women will invite the men to themselves, and solicit them to enjoy their beauty.

These debates, carried on in flowery, witty and extravagant language, outline an attractive earthly paradise. It goes without saying that Aristophanes shows that this sluggard's paradise will fail ludicrously. The tragicomical developments which accompany the regulation of amorous life and the neglect of public affairs render existence in the future State impossible. The young people are not able to approach their beloved maidens, as they are made wholly unhappy by the sexual

tribute which they are obliged first to pay to the old ladies and the faded spinsters. And the citizens, who, attracted by the festive dining halls, proceed to their meals with highly raised expectations, are only able to satisfy their hunger when they take with them something from home.

In the *Ecclesiazuses* Aristophanes ridicules the communistic enthusiasts. In *Plutos*, his last comedy, he scourges the insatiable rich, the unbridled lust for wealth. The problem dealt with here is an old yet ever new one; why are the evildoers rich and the virtuous poor? The discussions are extraordinarily copious. The underlying idea is: Plutos, the god of wealth, is blind and does not know what he does. To the question of the poor but virtuous Chremylos, as to why he distributes his favours so unequally, Plutos answers: "Zeus has made me blind. The supreme god is jealous of mankind; when I was very young, I used to boast that I would visit only the wise and good. Consequently, he made me blind, so that I should not know whom I would be visiting. *Chremylos*: Wouldst thou avoid the wicked if thou couldst see? *Plutos*: Yes, that I would. I would



only visit the good. All say to me that they are good, but when I go to them and make them rich, there is no end to their wickedness. *Chremylos* : Thus it is. Men can have enough of everything—bread, sweetmeats, figs—but never sufficient wealth. If a man have thirteen talents, he wants sixteen; let him have sixteen, and he desires twenty, otherwise he says life is miserable. Wealth is the most cowardly thing.”

*Chremylos* advises *Plutos* to betake himself to the temple of *Æsculapius* (the healing god) and to pass a night there; in this temple he would be cured of his blindness. *Plutos* follows this advice, and is able to see. Now poverty is to be driven out of *Hellas*. The personification of poverty appears at this juncture, and desires to prove that its existence is necessary. It contends with *Chremylos* and exclaims : “Thou wilt drive me out of *Hellas*? Thou believest that by this means thou wilt bring the greatest blessings to mankind? In reality, thou wilt inflict great harm upon mankind, if thou wilt make the good rich.” *Chremylos* contests this assertion in a long speech, and shows how just it would be if the wicked were poor and the good were

rich. To which Poverty makes reply : " If all were rich, who would then take the trouble to acquire science and knowledge of the arts? And if these disappeared, who would build our ships, till the soil, and carry on industry? *Chremylos* : You talk nonsense, for our servants shall toil at all these things for us. *Poverty* : Whence then will you have servants? *Chremylos* : There would be sufficient people who would bring us slaves from abroad, if we paid them well for doing so. *Poverty* : But who would expose themselves to the dangers of kidnapping, if without this they could be rich enough? Do you imagine that when all have plenty of money, they will still be obliged to work themselves, in order to create the amenities of existence? your gold and silver will not even help them. To-day, the rich can procure everything because there are the poor, who produce the various commodities which render life possible and agreeable for you. You must not confuse poverty with misery ; mankind are not to be miserable, neither are they to live in superfluity and lose the incentive to vigorous labour. You say yourself that the poor are better men than the rich."

Chremylos and his friends are disconcerted by these arguments. Then Plutos appears cured of his blindness. He greets the Sun, the beautiful Attic country, and exclaims : " I am ashamed of my past, and I blush for the company I have kept for so long, while I was avoiding the men who deserved my friendship. Henceforth I will follow the opposite road, and show mankind that when I tarried with knaves and rogues it was against my wishes."

The result of this change is extremely remarkable. The wicked lose their wealth. Now all begin to visit Plutos, but the way to him lies through honesty and wisdom. And the finest witticism comes at the end of the comedy. The priests complain that henceforth they will be obliged to starve. One priest laments, " Since Plutos has been able to see, I have been exposed to hunger, although I am a priest of Zeus. Before this, when all men were rich, they used to come to the temple and sacrifice. If a merchant was saved from any danger, from the risks of travel, or from penal laws he betook himself to the temple, and brought presents ; or when people made vows, they called in the priests.

Now nobody comes. I am thinking of leaving the service of Zeus. All are good, wise and rich."

The meaning of this comedy can only be expressed in the words of Goethe: "Let us only improve ourselves, and everything will soon be better." And this is also the fundamental idea of Aristotle.

7. *Zeno—Communistic Descriptions. Egypt under the Ptolemies.*

The communist idea, or at least the idea of equality, must have been very strong in Hellas when an intellect of so individualist and middle-class a type as that of Aristotle was obliged to make concessions to it. Then comes the Stoic school, who, as already explained in our introduction, propagated the principles of Anarchist communism and of international brotherhood. Of their founder Zeno little is known. His writings are lost, save for a few fragments from which it appears that he regarded natural law as the sole valid guiding principle of life. Thus: no political government, no courts of justice, no man-made laws, but goods in common, equality of the sexes, brotherhood of all mankind.

Two politico-geographical events contributed to the spread of Platonic ideas by the Stoa. First, the expedition of Alexander the Great to anterior Asia and India (334-323), which, while it did not lead to the establishment of a permanent world empire, opened up to the Hellenic language and culture the lands from the Adria to the Indus, and from the Danube to the Nile. Secondly, the subsequent appearance of the Roman Empire, which added still further territory in the west and north, and which permitted the growth of uniform and universal mental tendencies. In the Roman Empire the universal intellectual force was Hellenism, in which the philosophy of Plato and the social ethics of the Stoa predominated. To hold property in common was esteemed the highest social virtue, and pleasure was found in delineating social-reform legislators and kings, as well as communist thinkers and settlements. We find these tendencies with Philo and Josephus touching the Essenes, and with Plutarch respecting the Spartan legislators and reformers.

There was a similar readiness to describe unknown communistic colonies. Diodorus (about the middle of the first century before



Christ) collected several of these accounts in his Historical Library (Book II. chaps. 55-60, Book V. chaps. 41-46). We read there of some peculiar men who were discovered upon an island in the Indian Ocean by a certain Yambulos and his friend, while on a voyage of business to the spice lands. "The inhabitants (of admirable physical proportions) live united according to kinship, in families and tribes, but never more than 400 in one community. They dwell on pastures and meadows, as the country provides them with abundant sustenance; the soil of the island is excellent, the air being of the finest. Cereal plants grow of themselves in greater abundance than they are required. There are also rich springs, partly warm for bathing, which quickly cure every fatigue, partly cold, of great sweetness and healing power. They devote much attention to science, especially to astronomy. Marriage is not known there, and the children who are born are brought up in common, and loved by all equally. While they are small, it often happens that the nurses exchange their charges so that mothers do not know their own children. Consequently, there is no ambition among

these people, and they live without internal unrest and rebellions, and put concord above everything else. Everybody observes a temperate mode of living, and only consume as much food as their needs require. The cookery is simple; special arts of cookery and of making sauces and varieties of sausages are unknown to them." Here we find the ideal state of Plato realised.

Another account of Diodorus relates to State socialism. It is taken from the Greek writer Euhomeros, a contemporary of Zeno, who in his *Sacred Records* seeks to demonstrate that the gods were not supernatural beings, but heroic men, who were deified by mankind. Euhomeros professes to have obtained this knowledge from inscriptions in the island of Hieria (either off the Southern Arabian or the Southern Egyptian coast). Next he describes the institutions of this island, which correspond to the ideal of Egyptian State socialism. The soil of the country is divided among the inhabitants, and the most fertile tract is the share of the king. The people who dwell on the island are called Panchæns. The whole of the citizens are divided into three classes: the first class are the priests, to which class the

handworkers also belong; the second are the tillers of the soil; the third are the warriors and shepherds. The priests have the supreme direction of all things; the peasants cultivate the soil, and bring in the produce to the common store; in a similar fashion the shepherds supply the sacrificial animals and the other fruits of the flock to the community, everything being most exact as to number and weight. For it is a law that nobody may himself own more than one house and one garden; all the products and returns are received by the priests, who equitably allot to each person his share; they themselves, however, receive a twofold share" (Book V. chaps. 41-46).

This description of the Panchæns seems to be an idealisation of the condition of Egypt under the Hellenic administration. Alexander the Great also conquered Egypt and besieged the capital, Alexandria, which had become a chief centre of Hellenic culture. After his death (323) the Macedonian world empire dissolved into numerous small States, and into three great States: Macedonia (with Greece), Syria (anterior Asia) and Egypt, where Alexander's leading generals founded

dynasties. In Egypt the Ptolemies reigned in the place of the old Pharaohs. In the Ptolemaic period, the property relations developed on the following lines : the king or the State was the sole proprietor of the land and soil. Private property existed only in houses, gardens and vineyards, while the whole of the cornfields were royal or State property, and leased to the peasants; the lease was hereditary or for a term, but was in any case accompanied by certain conditions. The Ptolemies confiscated the priestly and feudal possessions, which had survived from former times, and the priests and feudal lords thenceforth became part of the order of officials who administered the system of leasing taxation. The legal position of the peasant was a good one, but the more urgent the fiscal exigencies became, the more arbitrary became the attitude of the State towards the agricultural population, until they were eventually degraded into a state of servitude. (Rostowzew, *Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Kolonats*, pp. 11, 15, 58, 61.)

### 8. *The Downfall of Greece.*

The Peloponnesian War and the consequent struggles of the separate States (Sparta, Athens and Thebes) for supremacy (404–362) resulted in the destruction of all the national independence of this poetic, philosophical and experimenting community. Its misfortune was its inability to establish a uniform Hellenic empire. It fell under the dominion of the Macedonians, and about the middle of the second century B.C., together with the latter, under the sway of the Romans.

During all these external wars, vigorous social struggles broke out at home between the haves and the have-nots, between social democrats and plutocratic oligarchies; redistribution of the soil, relief of debtors, banishments and massacres were frequent occurrences in periods of acute crisis. The hatred between the two classes was inextinguishable. A glimpse of it may be obtained from Aristotle's indication that there were oligarchies in Hellas, in which the supreme authorities swore the following oath upon entering into office: "I will be an enemy of the people, and will contrive to inflict as much



damage upon them as possible" (*Politics*, 5, 9, 11). Isocrates testifies that the sentiments of the rich were so bitter that they would sooner throw their belongings into the sea than give them to the poor. What the ideas of the Demos were we have seen from Plato, Aristophanes and the other social poets, for all these thinkers and poets have their roots not only in the economic and political conditions of their time, but also in the moral condition and in the complaints of the struggling dispossessed sections of the population. The Hellenes were plain-spoken, and they were endowed in rich measure with speech which expressed their thoughts and emotions. They were remarkably free from hypocrisy. This was one of the impediments which unfitted them to pursue an imperialist policy, to found a great empire or to preserve it.

## CHAPTER V

### ROME

#### 1. *Character of Roman Historical Writing.*

ROMAN history until 300 B.C. is for the greater part fabulous; it is based on oral traditions, and the Roman archives were destroyed in the year 390 B.C. by the invasion of the Celtic races. It was not until the second century B.C. that Roman annalists appeared, under the literary influence of the Greeks, and a century later, Roman historians who wrote the history of their country, first in the Greek, and then in the Latin languages, but always with a conservative, patriotic and anti-revolutionary bias. Even the Greek writers like Polybius,<sup>1</sup> Plutarch<sup>2</sup> and Appian,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Polybius wrote at the end of the second century B.C.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch composed in the second century A.D. a series of comparative Greek and Roman biographies of great men of both peoples. His works are very readable.

<sup>3</sup> Appian, a younger contemporary of Plutarch, is specially notable for his description of the Roman civil wars.

who wrote Roman history in their mother tongue, were swayed by Roman influence. The Roman historians, like Sallust,<sup>1</sup> Livy<sup>2</sup> and Tacitus,<sup>3</sup> were seldom just to reformers. To revolutionary movements they were simply hostile and regarded their instigators and leaders as mere criminals. In national matters, in struggles against revolutionaries and external enemies the Romans were inspired by ruthless egoism and self-righteousness, in their eyes all adversaries of Rome were perjurers, traitors, violators of treaties and disturbers of the peace. And this was also the opinion of their Latin historians, who now constitute the source upon which we must draw for our judgment of the reformers, revolutionaries and rebels who challenged Roman traditions. The Greek writers we have previously mentioned were, it is true, less disposed to condemn in the lump all opponents of Rome, but still they wrote for the Latins, and were certainly not immune from flattery,

<sup>1</sup> Sallust, a contemporary and disciple of Julius Cæsar, born 86, died 35 B.C., is known for his account of the rebellion of Catilina.

<sup>2</sup> Livy, born 59, died 17 B.C.

<sup>3</sup> Tacitus, born about 55, died about 120 A.D.

or they allowed themselves to be influenced too often by Roman prejudices. The rebels who suffered most from this were Cataline and Spartacus, who became really dangerous to the Romans as leaders of revolution and rebellion. Moreover, the Romans were not an intellectual people who could have found pure joy in great movements and ideas when such went counter to Roman interests. Among the Romans we find no Plato, no Aristophanes and no Sophocles. Men like the Hebrew prophets were quite inconceivable with the Romans. It is consequently a very difficult task to write a revolutionary history of Rome.

## 2. *Patricians and Plebeians.*

The traditions and institutions of the Romans imply that they were originally organised into gentes and tribes, and were unacquainted with individual property. At the head of the community, which originally did not extend beyond the town of Rome, were "kings," that is, chieftains, who were at the same time captains in the field, high priests and judges. According to the legend, the founder of the town of Rome was Romulus,

who, like Cain, was a fratricide. In very early times we find two classes there, the Patricians and the Plebeians, which were engaged in mutual struggle.

The Patricians were substantial peasants, who occupied all important positions, and grew into the dominant class. The Plebeians were small peasants, who, although free, were excluded from political power. This antagonism was not a class struggle; the Plebeians aspired to no other kind of economic order, and represented no more ideal philosophy than the Patricians. Both classes were always ready to enslave and exploit other tribes. The Plebeians demanded from the Patricians merely equal opportunities of economic and political exploitation. Supported by their political power, the Patricians expropriated the greater part of the State domains (*ager publicus*); the Plebeians lapsed into servitude, and gradually became the debtors of the Patricians; the debt laws were harsh, and interest was high. The Plebeians demanded a share in political power, and especially in the State domains. The latter seem to have been originally a vestige of common property; later it consisted of



conquered territory, which was transformed into public lands.

At the beginning of the sixth century the old Gentile conditions were so far disintegrated that the Patricians abolished the "kings," and founded a republic of nobles, in which the most prominent Patricians arrogated to themselves all the power which still remained to the kings. At the head of the republic were two consuls, who appointed two subordinate officials (*Quastoria*) as directors of the finances and the records. In times of necessity and danger one of the consuls appointed a dictator for a maximum period of six months, and invested with absolute powers.

The antagonism of interests between the two sections, which had softened to some extent during the epoch of the "kings," then became more acute, as, in the meantime, Rome had made war upon its neighbours, and acquired new State domains, which mostly fell to the Patricians. In the year 494 B.C. the Plebs had sunk so low that they turned their backs on their native city and withdrew to the holy mountain, in order to found their own community. The Patricians,

having constant need of soldiers for their war policy, were impelled to make concessions, and they allowed the Plebs to appoint two tribunes, whose duties would consist in protecting the small peasants from the arbitrary rule of the Patrician officials, and in convening meetings of Plebeians to pass resolutions (Plebiscites). The Plebiscites, however, had merely the value of resolutions passed by meetings. They remained pious wishes, without legal effect. The struggle went on, not unaccompanied by bloodshed. But in the degree in which the Patricians developed their foreign war policy, and enriched themselves, they became more complaisant towards the Plebeians at home, as, without the co-operation of the latter, they could not carry out their foreign policy. In the fourth century the Plebs made important political and economic progress. In the year 367 the legislative projects of Licinius were adopted. They considerably relieved the debt burdens of the Plebeians; fixed the maximum appropriation of the State domains at 500 acres, which would enable the Plebs to receive the share of the conquered territories; and appointed one Plebeian as consul. Further political

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concessions were made from time to time, and in the year 287 the Plebs were admitted to complete equality of rights. Henceforth they were able to participate in all the economic advantages of conquest, for, during this entire period, the Patricians did not cease to subjugate the Italian tribes, one after another, and to extend the domination of Rome over all Italy.

This was in itself a first-class political achievement, and it was chiefly the work of the Roman Patricians. These tenacious, superstitious, common-sense and militarily efficient peasants completed in Italy a work which the intellectual, highly cultivated and philosophical class of nobles in Hellas could never have accomplished.

Soon after the unity of classes had been effected, a new nobility arose out of the richer Patricians and Plebeians, which seized all the positions for its adherents. Henceforth foreign policy overstepped national boundaries; it became world policy, which at that time signified the mastery of the Mediterranean and its coasts.

### 3. *World Policy and Dissolution.*

The years 264 to 133 B.C. witnessed the rise of Rome to the position of greatest world power. This progress was accompanied by a transformation of the economic bases of Rome. Money economy and speculation supplanted the peasant economy which had hitherto been prevalent. In the year 269 silver coinage was introduced; five years later the first Punic War broke out: the war against Carthage, at that time the greatest commercial power in the Mediterranean. Carthage dominated the North African coast, Southern Spain, Sardinia and West Sicily. In this war, which lasted from 264 to 241, Sicily and Sardinia were conquered by Rome, and the Romans realised the importance of mastery of the sea; consequently they built a great fleet, which partly served the purposes of war, and partly the interests of commerce. Ship-builders and trading companies came into existence. The second Punic War (218 to 201), in which the Semitic general, Hannibal, one of the greatest military geniuses of all time, became the terror of Rome, might have put an end to Roman

conquests if the Carthaginian plutocracy had been more statesmanlike, or the Roman Senate less determined, or the Roman people less patriotic. These circumstances nullified the military achievements of Hannibal.<sup>1</sup>

Carthage was overthrown and completely destroyed in the third Punic War (149 to 146), with all the brutal and hypocritical cruelty of which the Romans were capable. In the meantime, the Romans had subjugated Greece, Asia Minor and Spain. A stream of precious metals and slaves had flowed to Rome and undermined the old and vigorous peasant State.

The work of destruction was all the easier as the wars, especially the second Punic War, had destroyed the greater part of the old classes of Patricians and Plebeians. From this draining of strength Rome never recovered. When at the summit of its material power, Rome was already at the beginning of its moral downfall. The descent was slow but sure, and in the first century B.C. its symptoms became clearly defined.

<sup>1</sup> The Roman historian, Livy, expresses this opinion still more strongly: "Not the Roman people, but the disfavour of the Carthaginian Senate defeated Hannibal" (*Roman History*, XXX. 20).



Or, as the Roman historian Sallust narrates :  
“ The victors knew neither measure nor limit. Riches became a means of distinction and glory, power and influence followed their possession. As a result, the edge of virtue was dulled and poverty was accounted a disgrace. But the passion for defilement, gluttony and all other kinds of indulgence had kept pace with that for wealth. Each sex alike trampled on their modesty.”

The war favoured the growth of capitalist merchants and trading companies, which made loans to the State and supplied ships, provisions and war materials at exorbitant prices. They leased the State domains and mines in the conquered countries, collected the taxes, and supplied slaves for large-scale agriculture. Roman capital was not industrially productive, like modern European capital, in the period of the industrial revolution. It resembled the hyænas of the Roman battlefields; it gorged itself with the spoils of the Roman legions and squeezed the conquered countries. The senatorial families and officials were drawn into the business; the highest State officials became corruptible, and from 160 even the Senate

was reputed to be bribable. The peasantry, which had been decimated during the long wars, gradually disappeared, partly in consequence of the competition of the cheap corn, which was imported from the provinces (conquered territories), partly as a result of being bought out by the new rich, who wished to attach to themselves a noble appendage in the shape of landed property. The old peasant farms were superseded by the *latifundia*, large-scale agricultural undertakings, with much vine culture and pasturage.

Productive labour was carried on more and more by slaves, while the free rural and urban workers fell into unemployment, drifted to Rome, where they lived as vagabonds upon the public supplies of corn, and were kept in a good humour by the public games, and were used as voting cattle. Wealth was concentrated in a few hands; in the year 104 B.C. a tribune complained that scarcely 2000 rich persons existed in the whole State. The causes of violent social unrest were therefore operative. They manifested themselves in two ways: (1) the reform movements for the restoration of the peasants (Gracchi), or for the redistribution of property (Catiline);

(2) slave insurrections, of which that of Spartacus was the most famous.

4. *Reform Struggles—Gracchus, Catiline and Cicero.*

The attempt to restore the status of the peasant was undertaken by the brothers Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, who sprang from the old Roman nobility. Tiberius was the people's tribune in the year 134 B.C., and was summoned by the poor citizens to secure for them the enjoyment of the State domains. One year later he made the proposal to limit the appropriation of the State domains, and to create unalienable homesteads on hereditary leases of twenty acres out of the land thus liberated. It appears that the former owners of the surrendered land were to be compensated, and the small peasant was likewise to receive State assistance in procuring stock. As the nobles offered opposition, Tiberius set on foot a comprehensive agitation, and in a description of the privations of the people he said: "The wild beasts of Italy have their caves to retire to, but the brave men who spill their blood in her cause have nothing left but air and light. Without houses, without any

settled habitation, they wander from place to place with their wives and children, and their generals do but mock them when, at the head of their armies, they exhort them to fight for their sepulchres and household gods, for among such numbers there is not perhaps one Roman who has an altar that belonged to his ancestors or a sepulchre in which their ashes rest. The private soldiers fight and die to advance the wealth and luxury of the great; and they are called masters of the world, while they have not a foot of ground in their possession" (Plutarch, "T. S. Gracchus").

As the time approached when the Popular Assembly would vote upon the proposed legislation, Tiberius, as Appian reports (*Civil Wars*, Book 1, chap. 11), delivered a long speech and asked "if it were not just that communal goods should be communally shared; if the citizen was not always better than the slave, the warrior more useful than those unfit for war?" After the Romans, so he continued, had already conquered most countries by force of arms, and had also directed their hopes upon the remaining inhabited countries, they were confronted

with the alternative of either conquering the remaining countries by their hosts of warlike men, or of losing even their present possessions through their weakness and envy.

He warned the wealthy, in view of these circumstances, to abandon their lands, as a voluntary offering, and upon their own initiative, to those who brought up children for the State, and not to overlook the most important things while disputing about trifles. According to Appian, then, Gracchus was chiefly influenced by the desire to furnish numerous and warlike citizens for the Roman State, to afford it the opportunity of maintaining its conquests and extending them. In any case, the proposed reform was a social conservative measure.

The enthusiasm of the people for Tiberius Gracchus was so overpowering that the Senate finally accepted the proposal, but great difficulties arose in its execution. Tiberius was therefore obliged to offer himself as a candidate for the tribunate of the year 132, and held election meetings. In one of these meetings, the supporters of the Senate's party appeared with cudgels and sticks and slew Tiberius and many of his supporters.



Nevertheless the Agrarian Law was not inoperative; about 80,000 small peasant homesteads were created.

The work of Tiberius was resumed by his brother Caius in the year 123. Elected as a people's tribune, he carried through a measure that a certain quantity of corn should be served out to the people every month at the expense of the State. He reformed the judiciary, caused long roads to be constructed throughout Italy, in order to give employment to the workless, and also tried to democratise the franchise and to take in hand a comprehensive internal colonisation. Eventually, Caius shared the fate of his brother; he was slain in 121.

It accords perfectly with Roman hypocrisy that a Temple of Concord was built upon the spot where the murder of the Gracchi and their supporters took place.

In spite of the concord extremely murderous slave insurrections and civil wars soon broke out. In the year 100 the so-called democrat Marius was instrumental in murdering 50 senators and 1000 knights, his opponent Sulla (82), 40 senators and 1600 knights.

Their property was confiscated; the proceeds of the confiscation of Sulla's property amounted to about four million pounds sterling; usury and mercantile capital bought up the sequestered goods, which were worth four times the purchase price. In the year 73 the Spartacus rebellion broke out, which we will deal with presently. These conditions furnished the inflammable materials for the conspiracy of Catiline, in the year 63 B.C. The Roman historian Sallust, who wrote of the events from his social conservative standpoint, thought that the Roman people at that time found themselves in a lamentable state of mind: "From the setting to the rising of the sun its arms had subdued every land to obedience; at home there was tranquillity and wealth in abundance, and yet there were found citizens with minds hardened to undertake their own and their country's destruction. Two decrees of the Senate had been passed, but of all that host not one was enticed by the reward offered to betray the conspiracy, not one deserted the camp of Catiline; so virulent was the disease that had settled like a plague on the minds of many citizens. Nor was this mental disorder

confined to those who had been admitted to the conspiracy; it may be said that the whole of the common people, in their eagerness for revolution, approved the designs of Catiline" (*Catiline's Conspiracy*, chaps. 36, 37).

Thus the sentiments of the masses were revolutionary. However, the historian represents Catiline, the leader of this movement, as the most horrible monster of world history. In his biography of Theseus, Plutarch says a very wise thing: "It appears to be dangerous, in fact, to make oneself hated by a State in which eloquence and poetry flourish." The same thing applies to individual cases. Catiline had the misfortune to have for his political and personal enemy, Cicero, one of the greatest orators of all times. Two characters more opposed to each other could not exist. Catiline sprang from the highest nobility of Rome; Cicero was a provincial upstart. The former was an officer, always ready to represent the cause of the oppressed in the State with the highest courage; the latter was a lawyer and the type of an anxious, moralising lower middle-class man, careful of his property. Both confronted each other in the year 63 as candidates for the Consular

dignity, Cicero as representative of the property interests, Catiline as leader of the dispossessed and as a reformer, whose proposals aimed at securing a share in the land to all the dispossessed, relieving them of their burden of debts, introducing a stricter supervision over the State finances, and generally at promoting the welfare of the masses of the people by social and political measures; likewise, he seems to have stood for an alleviation of the lot of the peoples subjugated by Rome. What Cicero thought about these questions may be clearly seen from the opinions which he expressed in his book the *Duties* (Book II. chaps. 22-24): "But they who wish to be popular, and upon that account either attempt the agrarian affair that the owners may be driven out of their possessions, or they that borrowed money should be released to the debtors, sap the foundations of the constitution; for this is the peculiar concern of a State and city, that every person's custody of his own property be free and undisturbed. Now what justice is it that lands which have been preoccupied for many years or for several ages, he who was possessed of none should get, but he who was in possession should

lose? And on account of this kind of injustice, the Lacedemonians expelled their Ephorus Lysander, and put to death their king Agis, a thing which never before had been among them. And from that time such great dissensions ensued that a constitution admirably established fell to pieces. Nor did it fall alone, but also overthrew the rest of Greece by the contagion of evil principles, which, having sprung from the Lacedemonians, flowed far and wide. Was it not the agrarian contentions that destroyed our own Gracchi? Should any dwell free of expense in another man's house? Why so? Is it that when I shall have bought, built, repaired, expended, you, without my will, should enjoy what is mine? What else is this but to take from some what is theirs, and give to some what is another man's? But what is the meaning of the abolition of debts unless that you should buy an estate with my money, that you should have the estate and I should not have my money? "

Holding these opinions, Cicero was obliged, when chosen Consul in opposition to Catiline, to take up the struggle for law, order and property. And, in doing so, he made use of



his best weapons: eloquence, demagogic special pleading, the branding of his opponents as men bereft of all morality, all propriety, and all honour. This caricature of Catiline by Cicero has been transmitted to posterity. The Roman historian Sallust, a social conservative patriot, who wrote two decades later, followed Cicero, and even the historians of Rome who wrote in Greek, like Plutarch and Appian, made no attempt to do justice to Catiline. Plutarch even repeats quite uncritically the most absurd stories about Catiline and his friends. This much, however, is certain, that Catiline identified himself with all the dispossessed and oppressed, and was venerated unreservedly by the masses. The spirit which animated the Catilinarians is evident from the letter which their military leader, Manlius, sent to the Roman general Marcius: "We do not demand dominion or wealth, which are the sources of all the wars and quarrels in the world; we ask only for freedom."

Catiline offered himself twice as a candidate for the Consular dignity, in order to obtain the legal power "to draw the teeth of the few potentates who possessed the

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State as their exclusive property, and restore to the people their liberty and rights." In the elections the party of order triumphed. Catiline was defeated. As the legal way was closed to him, he proceeded to make preparations for an insurrection, and to organise the masses of the discontented. Cicero, the victorious opponent of Catiline, had his spies everywhere, who were able to perform their work all the more easily, as Catiline had departed to the country, in order to get into touch with the Roman army there.

The preparations for the rebellion were discovered in Rome on the 5th December, 63 B.C., and the ringleaders were executed. Catiline and his troops were defeated by the superior forces of the Romans, in open battle, not far from Florence, in the year 62. Catiline and Manlius were among the slain. The stubborn character of the fighting may be inferred from the description in Sallust's concluding chapter: "It was only after the battle was decided that it could be fully seen with what daring and resolution Catiline's army had been inspired. Almost the exact position which each had taken up while living

he now in death covered with his body. Catiline, however, was found at a distance from his own men among the enemies' dead. He continued to breathe for a short time and retained on his countenance that savage courage that had marked him in life."

The corrupt and oligarchical republic was rapidly approaching its end. Two years after the death of Catiline Rome saw the military triumvirate of Pompey, Crassus and Julius Cæsar. The military monarchy was knocking at the doors of the Roman world empire.

### 5. *Slave Insurrections.*

Since the conclusion of the second Punic War (201 B.C.), and since the victorious wars against the Macedonians and Syrians, there had been an increase in the cultivation of the large estates by multitudes of slaves. And as national economy was operated on capitalist lines, and the Romans, as masters of the world, despised labour and the disinherited class, the lot of the unfree worker became more and more arduous. Likewise, almost all industry and all domestic labours were performed by slaves. Innumerable unfree workers were employed in luxurious building

and the construction of villas. Mountains were demolished, lakes were formed, according to the whims of the plutocrats.

The everlasting wars in all parts of the world furnished hundreds of thousands of prisoners, who were put into the slave yoke, but could not, however, satisfy the needs of the Roman masters. Consequently, man-hunts were organised, and kidnapping was practised, in order to fill the slave markets. Rome became the tyrant of three-quarters of the world. The treatment of the slaves became ever harsher. The measure of the severity is shown by the conduct of the elder Cato, a Roman famed for his great virtues, who simply sold his old slaves, after they had exhausted all their labour-power in his service. No wonder the slaves began to murmur, or inclined towards rebellion, or seized every opportunity for flight. To prevent them from absconding, slaves working on the land were branded with glowing irons, like cattle, and chained to their work. Flight was punished with death by crucifixion. The deepest degradation, however, was reserved for those slaves who, being distinguished by physical strength, were trained as gladiators

in order to furnish the spectacle of human slaughter in the arena to the Roman mob, the Patrician nobles and Plebeian populace.

Educated prisoners of war and hostages, like the Greeks, or slaves who were otherwise adept in business, like the Syrians, found positions as domestic teachers or administrators, and were gradually emancipated. One of these released hostages was the Greek historian Polybius, whose books are among the best works on Roman history. The Roman nobility and plutocracy had nothing but contempt for the Greeks, and lamented their influence on Roman civilisation. There were, indeed, exceptions, but generally speaking the dominant Romans despised Hellenism.

The concentration of slaves, these masses of men filled with the bitterest hatred, was certain sooner or later to lead to conspiracies and rebellions, and then it only depended on the presence of energetic leaders to bring the rebellions to a head. The first Italian slave insurrection broke out in Apulia, 187 B.C. It was soon put down; 7000 slaves were crucified. Incomparably more bloody and more protracted were the two great slave insurrections in Sicily (134-132, 104-101).



This fertile island offered an extensive field for slave labour. The State domains there were latifundia, broad cornfields, olive plantations and sheep walks. Masses of slaves cultivated the soil, tended the trees, guarded the flocks of sheep, and made Sicily the granary of Rome. The rebellion which broke out there in 134 developed into a protracted war. The leaders of the rebels were the Syrian Eunus and the Macedonian Kleon, who gathered around them 70,000 men capable of bearing arms, and the island came almost completely into their power. For several years they maintained their position against the Roman armies, but eventually they were defeated, partly by starvation and partly by force of arms. This took place at the same time as Gracchus was agitating Rome. The other Sicilian rebellion was likewise led by a Syrian named Salvius, and a Macedonian named Athenion. The Romans only succeeded in mastering the rebellion after the leaders had been slain in battle.

The years of the Gracchian agitation were generally a period of insurrections. Even in Asia Minor both the possessing class and the slaves rebelled against the extension of the

Roman domination. In the year 133, King Attalos III died in Pergamon. He was a mentally deficient and degenerate monarch, who had succumbed to the Roman influence. Either by force or by fraud the Romans received from him a testament, in which Attalos bequeathed to Rome his very considerable property, in addition to his land. At the same time, Pergamon was transformed into a complete political democracy; the whole of the inhabitants, native and foreign, property-owning and disinherited, received the franchise and the independent administration of their State.

Now, when the Romans entered into their heritage and sought to extend their dominion over the country, a rebellion broke out, the leadership being assumed by Aristonikos, a half-brother of Attalos. He lived in Leuka, a small port between Smyrna and Pdokea. Several towns declared in his favour, but others, like Ephesus, ranged themselves on the side of the Romans. A war broke out, in which Aristonikos was at first defeated. Soon, however, he reappeared as a liberator of the slaves, and summoned all unfree workers to take part in the struggle against

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the Romans. Multitudes of slaves answered his appeal, and, with them, he founded a Sun town or a Sun State (*heliopolis*). What this foundation implied is not clear; the historical records leave us here quite in the dark.

It might, however, be mentioned that this is conjectured to have been a communist society. At the close of antiquity, as well as in the middle ages, a Sun State was understood to mean a communist establishment. The citizens of the Sun State, who were led by Aristonikos, that is, the freed slaves, organised themselves rapidly and made a victorious progress through the Pergamonian country. The Romans, who rather feared the loss of their rich heritage, sent troops to Pergamon, in the year 131, and placed them under the chief command of a Consul. It must therefore have been an army of considerable size; nevertheless, it was constantly defeated by Aristonikos. But the war was continued until the year 129, and the sundwellers were finally defeated. Aristonikos was taken prisoner, brought to Rome, and executed.

6. *Spartacus*.

The innumerable sacrifices to Roman covetousness were to find in Spartacus such an avenger as Rome had never known. The rebellion of the exploited and oppressed under the leadership of this man (from the year 73 to 71 B.C.) was the only affair that terrified the masters of the world, and prepared for them humiliations and defeats which covered them with ridicule and shame. It was slaves of the lowest order, gladiators, who measured their strength with the consular armies of Rome, victoriously opposed them, and frequently inflicted crushing defeats upon them in open battle. The depth of degradation into which Rome was plunged by this rebellion is shown by the observation of the Roman historian Florus (*Roman History*, Book III. chap. 20) :

“ The shame of a slave war is still to be borne. Slaves, however degraded by fate, still belong to the second order of humanity, and are able to demand the privileges of freedom. But I do not know how to describe the war with Spartacus. Here slaves were warriors, and gladiators were generals. The

former from the lowest class, the latter from the most despised class, added the element of ridicule to the element of danger."

Spartacus was a general and organiser of the greatness of Hannibal. With sufficient numbers of properly equipped forces he could have overthrown the dominion of Rome. Plutarch (*Life of Crassus*) describes him as "extremely strong and earnest, wise and humane above his station, more like a true Greek than a barbarian." Coming from a Hellene like Plutarch, this is very great praise.

Extremely little is known of his youth, and of his life generally up till 73 B.C. He was a Thracian, and was born in a nomadic tribe. He came to Rome as a prisoner of war, and was sold as a slave. He escaped, became a hired soldier, and was eventually sold to the proprietor of a fencing school in Capua, in order to be trained as a gladiator. Spartacus found himself with about 200 other slaves, Thracians and Gauls, who conspired to break loose on the first favourable opportunity, and to win freedom. The conspiracy was betrayed, but Spartacus and some 70 with him managed to break through. On their way, they plundered a waggon containing arms,



which they soon used with success against the pursuers, who had been despatched by their owner. This success quickly became known in the district, and brought them fresh supporters and fighters. Henceforth they numbered 200 men, who behaved towards the proprietors without ceremony. At first they were regarded as a dangerous band of robbers, against which the Roman authorities sent the Prætor, Cladius Pulcher, with 3000 men, in order to put a stop to the depredations. Spartacus took up a position on the summit of Vesuvius, at that time inactive, and totally defeated his enemies. Camp, baggage and arms fell into his hands. From this moment Spartacus was a famous man. His name was known throughout Italy. He declared himself openly to be an enemy of Rome, and called upon all who were slaves or oppressed to rally round him, and to engage in the struggle for emancipation. Multitudes of slaves and dispossessed, foreigners and Italians, responded to his appeal. Country people left their holdings, shepherds their sheep, slaves their masters, prisoners broke their bars, conscripted workers broke their chains—all flocked to him, the chastiser of

Rome. Out of the hordes which came together Spartacus formed an army, which gave a good account of itself in battle, but even his genius did not succeed in inducing these bitter and hate-breathing men to observe proper behaviour towards non-combatants. Plundering and burning, they marched through the country, devastated the blooming campania, their light troops even penetrating into the districts which bordered on Rome, everywhere spreading frightfulness. The lust of the troops for plunder was one of the causes which sometimes prevented Spartacus from utilising his victories or attacking the enemy at an opportune moment. Likewise, he found it very difficult to maintain in a state of permanent unity the various ethnical elements, Thracians, Syrians, Gauls, Germans, Italians, etc., of which his army was composed.

The news of the defeat of the Prætor, Claudius Pulcher, was received in Rome with incredulity and astonishment. An army of 8000 to 10,000 men was quickly raised—the proper Roman legions were not used in such expeditions; moreover, at that time, they were engaged in Spain and on the Lower

Danube, under the great generals Pompey and Lucullus—and placed under two Prætors. Spartacus was circumspect, and did not venture to offer open battle to his enemies. But his subordinate generals, especially the Gauls, regarded his foresight as timidity, attacked the Romans with 3000 men, and were beaten. Only then did the remainder recognise the wisdom of their leader, submitted themselves to his orders, and consented to the retreat, which was carried out without loss. Spartacus, however, soon found an opportunity to retrieve the defeat. After several successful skirmishes and raids, it came to a battle, which ended in a brilliant victory for Spartacus. All Lower Italy fell as booty to the gladiators.

The slave army rejoiced and plundered, while Spartacus became more and more serious. Having a good knowledge of the Roman power, he knew that the campaign up to the present had signified merely a small outpost fight, and had scarcely touched the power of Rome. His mind was, above all, bent upon the liberation of the slaves, and he believed he could perform this work to a large extent. The slaves of Lower Italy

were already free. His idea now was to march rapidly northwards, range through the whole of Italy, and beat down all the obstacles that stood in the way of his work of liberation, before the Romans gained time to recover from their fright, and recalled their great generals, Pompey and Lucullus, with their legions. This train of thought revealed great statesmanlike insight. But his subordinate generals, and also the troops, who had tasted Roman blood, offered violent and stubborn opposition to this plan. In vain Spartacus reminded them that they had not yet measured their strength with the real legions of Rome, in vain he described to them the whole extent of the power of this world empire. It might, indeed, be surprised for a time, but it was scarcely likely to be overcome when it collected together all its resources. The army was divided in opinion : the Gauls and the Germans, under the leadership of the subordinate general Crixius, were for a march upon the city of Rome ; the Thracians and the southern Italians adhered to Spartacus. Meanwhile Rome made comprehensive preparations to meet the gladiatorial army with all its strength. The original

disparagement had given place to caution. Three powerful armies were soon sent into the field, two under Consuls, and therefore under the highest officials of Rome, and one under a Prætor. In face of this Roman armament, Spartacus and Crixius patched up their differences, but a real union was not effected. Henceforth they marched separately; Spartacus with 40,000 men, Crixius with 30,000 men. Soon Crixius met the Roman Prætorian army, which fell into disorder and took to flight upon being attacked by the Gauls and Germans. As the pursuit was dilatory, the Prætorian army collected itself on the following day, fell upon the unsuspecting Gauls and overpowered them. Crixius himself was killed in battle. About 10,000 men were able to save themselves by flight, and forced their way to Spartacus. The victorious Prætorian army then made a junction with one of the two Consular armies, which, divided into two columns, sought out Spartacus. The latter did not keep them waiting. With the greater part of his army—the smaller part he ordered to hold the other Consular army in check—he hurled himself upon the first Consular



army, and completely defeated it. He speedily joined the remaining section of his army, attacked the same day the second Consular army, and also obtained a complete victory over the latter. The baggage and a great multitude of prisoners fell into the hands of Spartacus. Unwearied he continued his march northwards, defeating the troops which were hastily thrown against him by the Roman Prætors and Pro-consuls. He seemed invincible. His next enterprise was something that was felt in Rome to be the most painful humiliation. He arranged a solemn funeral for Crixius, and, on this occasion, compelled 300 Roman prisoners to appear as gladiators and engage in mortal combat, in the sight of the entire Spartacist army. The despised slaves were now the spectators—the proud Romans were the prize-fighters in the arena. Of all the news concerning the losses which had hitherto been suffered in this gladiatorial war, not any wounded the Romans so deeply, so bitterly as this. The death as gladiators of 300 Roman warriors inflicted the most ignominious insult upon the majesty of Rome, and made an indelible stigma upon its honour.

To treat kings and princes, taken as prisoners, with cold, calculated cruelty, to let them starve, be tortured, and die the most painful death in prison; to dispose of entire peoples as if they were herds of cattle—all this seemed to the citizens of Rome, the so-called first and noblest people on earth, as their proper prerogative. But that their captured citizens should also be compelled to engage in mutual slaughter, such an outrage, or even its bare possibility, had never entered a Roman's head. And who shamed them in this fashion? A man upon whose life and death only a few months before the outstretched or closed thumbs of some Plebeians could have decided. A man who, together with fifty or sixty of his kind, would have been compelled to die if it had pleased the whim of a young Roman Patrician to make a sacrifice to his deceased aunt.

Spartacus was now at the height of his power. It was possible for him to execute his original design, to liberate a multitude of slaves, to dissolve his army, and live in the consciousness of having humiliated Rome, the oppressor of the world. But he suddenly altered his plans. Instead of cross-

ing the Po, he turned back and made for the south. In Italy it was assumed that he intended to march against the city of Rome. To obstruct the road thither, a new Prætorian army was hurled at him; in the Picenian territory a great battle was fought, from which Spartacus once more emerged as victor. Rome now fell into a state of consternation. Spartacus, however, marched by Rome, and led his army into Lower Italy, occupied Thuria, declared it to be a free port, and promulgated benevolent laws. There are indications that Spartacus conceived the plan of establishing in Lower Italy a State upon the model of Lyncurgian Sparta. He abolished the use of gold and silver, fixed low prices for all the means of life, encouraged the simple Spartan mode of living, welded into a brotherhood the refugees from the various nations who lived under his protection, and educated them to a state of military efficiency. Occupied with these political plans, Spartacus forgot that the enemy, to whom he had allowed time to recover from his fright, was arming with all his strength. A strong, well-disciplined army was raised, and the Prætor Crassus, who was experienced in war, was

appointed supreme commander. The Romans now behaved with much greater caution, and also utilised their technical knowledge, in which they were superior to their enemies. Nevertheless, at the beginning they suffered defeats. Only when dissensions broke out in the camp of Spartacus—once more it was the hot-headed, undisciplined Gauls who operated independently under their own generals, and suffered great losses in the struggles with the Romans—did the position of Crassus become more favourable. Spartacus, indeed, won several victories over him, but eventually he succumbed to the Roman forces in the year 71. He was himself mortally wounded in the battle. Some 6000 men of his army fell into the hands of Crassus, who crucified them, whereas in the camp of Spartacus 3000 Roman prisoners were found alive. The “lowest” category of mankind, the warriors of Spartacus, had spared the lives of their foes. It was several decades before the Romans were able to divest themselves of the terrors inspired in them by the gladiatorial war. The Roman mothers among the common people used to frighten their naughty children with the cry, “Hush! Spartacus is coming.”

## CHAPTER VI

### ROMAN SOCIAL CRITICS

#### I. *The Laments of the Dispossessed.*

THE social developments which have been sketched (in the preceding chapter) became even more pronounced towards the end of the Republican epoch. From the struggles and wars which the Roman legions waged from the Rhine to the Euphrates, from the Danube to the Sahara deserts, the large-landed proprietor and the large capital that was bound up with the military apparatus emerged as the real victors. Julius Cæsar, once the secret friend of Catiline, later the victorious general, who aspired to the laurels of the social monarchy, made an attempt to rouse the Roman and Italian masses, to reorganise the provinces, and to heal the wounds inflicted upon them by large landed property and large capital, but the whole of his reformist endeavours bore a dictatorial



character. On the 15th March, 44 B.C., he was murdered, but thirteen years later the Roman Empire became a monarchy. Augustus was the first Roman Emperor (31-14 B.C.).

The years of this political upheaval represented a period of high intellectual civilisation, so far as the Romans generally were capable of such. The Latin poets Virgil (70-19 B.C.), Ovid (43 B.C. to A.D. 9), Horace (65-8 B.C.) were the literary ornaments of this period. And, as we have seen, the historians Sallust and Livy also belonged to this epoch. They marked the acme of the Latin intellectual civilisation. This was also the period in which the elements of a new world religion—Christianity—were gathered among the lower strata of the people, and in the seats of learning of Palestine and Alexandria.

From the social economic point of view nothing had altered in the meantime. Italy was covered with latifundia, which were operated by slaves and small holders for the exclusive advantage of their proprietors. The expulsion of peasants and the expropriation of the State domains were the means employed by the founders of the latifundia in Italy; and the provinces were disposed of

by the tax farmers, who received broad lands in Asia and Africa, and ruthlessly exploited the real tillers of the soil. Population decreased, general compulsory service was replaced by mercenary armies, and when later the great wars ceased, the number of slaves also diminished. The native Italian energy began to dry up. The famous saying of Pliny the elder (born 23, died A.D. 79), "The latifundia have ruined Italy, and are now ruining the provinces too" (*Natural History*, XVIII. 6, 35), describes the conditions which had begun to develop in the last century B.C. Pliny wrote about the middle of the first century, but long before this a proverb had been in vogue that a man signified only as much as he possessed.

The Roman poet Horace, who was anything but a demagogue, complained (*Odes*, II. 18) :

"What though you move the ancient bound,  
That marks your humble neighbour's ground,  
And avariciously o'erleap  
The limits right should bid you keep?  
Where lies your gain that driv'n from home  
Both wife and husband forth must roam,  
With squalid babes upon their breast?"

Seneca the elder, or the Rhetorician (54 B.C.

to A.D. 38), reports the complaint of a countryman, whose neighbour had burned down huts because the trees pleased him : " You rich own the countryside, and fill the towns and their environs with your palaces. So that your villas, lying in all directions, may be warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and be unaffected by changes in the seasons, so that there may be artificial woods and navigable lakes on your highest ridges, we see now simple slaves in the fields who formerly counted as a people, and the sphere of power of their masters extended farther than that of kings."

In another complaint of a poor man against a rich, the peasant tells the story of his sufferings : " At first I did not have a rich man for neighbour. All around me proprietors of equal fortune were settled upon numerous farms, and cultivated their modest domains in neighbourly concord. How different now ! The country which once supported all these citizens is now become a single great plantation, which belongs to a single rich man. His property has pushed forward its boundaries on all sides. The peasant farmsteads which it swallowed up

are levelled to the ground, and the sanctuaries of the fathers are destroyed. The old proprietors have taken leave of the protective god of the paternal house, and are obliged to travel afar, with wife and children. Uniform desolation reigns over the countryside. Everywhere I am enclosed by wealth as by a wall; here the gardens of the rich; there their fields; here their vineyards; there their woods and pastures. And this wholesale annexation only stopped short at the properties of other rich persons."

These complaints are the last despairing cry of the decaying Roman peasantry. And things were no better with the urban proletariat. The overseas expansion of Rome inflicted irreparable damage upon the Roman and Italian industrial workers.

The expropriation of the peasantry and overseas expansion are also the characteristic features of the beginning of the modern times of Western Europe. Why was the outcome of the two processes so different? In Rome it was followed by decay. In Christian Europe it was followed by economic and political prosperity.

In Western Europe the expropriated peasant

wandered to the towns, and found employment in industry and manufactures. The overseas conquests supplied raw material. The manufactured goods found a sale in the growing demand and the expanding market. In Rome the expropriated peasant wandered to the town, and found the superior competition of slaves. The overseas conquests were countries upon a higher level of civilisation than Rome. Asia Minor and Egypt were masters of industrial processes and products which the free Romans did not possess, and could not create. Just as the Greeks intellectually defeated their victors, so Asia Minor and Egypt proved themselves to be far superior to the Romans as producers. Rome became the market for the provinces. Its impoverished masses were obliged to live either by State doles or private benevolence, or to return to the land as small holders upon such conditions as the large landlords imposed on them.

Christian Europe pushed its way through from the Renaissance to the modern era, developed technology, enriched its sources of material aid, and completed the economic revolution. Rome, however, retrograded; it



created feudal conditions and forced the small tenants to become bondsmen. This was the so-called colonate, which struck root everywhere after the first century of the Imperial epoch.

It goes without saying that the whole of this Roman retrogression exposed the urban proletariat to privation, poverty and ruin. The discontent and the rebellious sentiments which had inspired all those who were dispossessed and heavily in debt, and proletarian existences generally at the time of Spartacus and Catiline, were bound, under such circumstances, to be considerably heightened.

Why is it, however, that we do not hear of any communistic movements on the part of the Roman proletariat? Before we answer this very important question we will digress for a while among the Roman writers who could not avoid giving expression here and there to critical social sentiments.

## 2. *Longings for Simplicity, Freedom and Harmony.*

As in Hellas, in times of sharp social divisions and proletarian movements, so the Latin poets and thinkers also glance back at

that period of primitive communism when men had lived in simplicity, in freedom and harmony. These poets either glorified or longed for the return of the Golden Age, which is equivalent to pronouncing a condemnation of the age of private property, violence, trade speculation, and war at home and abroad.

Sallust, in his *Catiline*, sighed regretfully for the time when the life of man was yet free from covetousness, and man contented himself with his own. Virgil is more pointed in his *Georgics* (I. 125-28), where he extols the time when Saturn still reigned (and not Jupiter, the god of the iron age, which brought so much trouble and pain) :

“Before the rule of Jove no tillers used to subdue the fields. It was impious then e’en to mark the field or distinguish it by bounds. Men’s gains were for the common stock; of her own free-will more readily the earth did all things bear when none solicited her gifts.”

Here Virgil puts forward the idea that in the time of primitive communism the soil of the earth was much more fertile, and showered its gifts on mankind without effort. This notion corresponds to the Biblical account of

Paradise. Only after the fall from grace did the earth bear thorns and thistles. In Virgil the hope persisted indestructible that the Golden Age, the reign of Saturn, would soon return, and bring back to mankind the blessings of that primitive period (*Bucolics*, Eclogue 4) :

“ The mighty line of cycles begins its round anew. Now too the maiden Astræa<sup>1</sup> returns, the reign of Saturn returns. Now a new generation of men is sent down from the height of heaven. Only be thou gracious to the birth of the child,<sup>2</sup> beneath whom the iron brood shall first begin to quail, and the golden race to arise in all the world.”

And Horace sings of the simplicity of the

<sup>1</sup> The maiden Astræa is the goddess of righteousness, but, according to Roman ideas, had left the earth in the iron age. When this goddess returns, it would signify the beginning of a new age of righteousness, or the Golden Age.

<sup>2</sup> By child Virgil here means the child of his protector and benefactor Pollio, who was Roman Consul. The poem was written about the year 42 B.C. in honour of the said Pollio, whose wife was near her confinement. Catholic theologians perceive in this Eclogue a prophecy relating to Jesus and Mary. In any case, this verse is very remarkable, showing as it does some acquaintance with Jewish Messianic ideas.

barbarians and their communism, and condemns riches (*Odes*, III. 23) :

“ The Scythians of the plains,  
More happy are housed in their wandering wains ;  
More blessed the Getan stout,  
Who not from acres marked and meted out  
Reaps his free trees and grain,  
Pour into the Capitol,  
Or down the nearest ocean roll,  
Our jewels, gems and gold attire,  
Nutriment of loss and miseries untold.”

This yearning after the simple natural life remote from luxury, and the complexities and cares and conflicts of civilisation was widespread in cultured circles in the first century of the Empire. This is the distinct expression of the stoical influence, which is embodied most definitely in Seneca the philosopher (son of the Rhetorician, born 4 B.C., died A.D. 65, by his own hand, in consequence of Nero's condemnation to death hanging over him). In his *Letters* (90) he describes the fascination of the simple natural life, and of primitive communism, and exclaims :

“ How happy was the primitive age when the bounties of nature lay in common and were used promiscuously. They enjoyed

all nature in common, which thus gave them secure possession of the public wealth. Why should I not think them the richest of all people among whom there was not to be found one poor man?

“But avarice broke in upon a condition so happily ordained, and by its eagerness to lay something away and to turn it to its own private use, made all things the property of others, and reduced itself from boundless wealth to straitened need. It was avarice that introduced poverty and by craving much lost all. And so although she now tries to make good her loss, although she adds one estate to another, evicting a neighbour either by buying him out or by wronging him, although she extends her country estates to the size of provinces and defines ownership as meaning extensive travel through one’s own property—in spite of all these efforts of hers no enlargement of our boundaries will bring us back to the condition from which we have departed. It was possible for no man either to surpass another or to fall short of him. What there was was divided among unquarrelling friends. Not yet had the stronger begun to lay hands upon the weaker. Not



yet had the miser, by hiding away what lay before him, shut off his neighbour from even the necessities of life. Each cared as much for his neighbour as for himself."

Seneca was, in fact, one of the most remarkable thinkers that Rome produced. He extols the day of death as the birthday of everlasting life and the peaceful blessedness of beyond. He vigorously recommends benevolence towards slaves, and even towards enemies. His mental outlook was in many respects so near to Christianity that many Church Fathers supposed him to have been a friend of St. Paul. This assumption, however, has been proved to be unfounded. Seneca is merely another proof that the later moral teaching of the Stoa tended in the same direction as the Jewish teaching in Palestine, or the Hellenic-Jewish teaching in Alexandria. Collectively they were the outcome of the intellectual, social and political development of the Roman Empire during the last century of the Republican period and the first century of the Empire.

The yearning for a harmonious, natural, personally free social order ran parallel with the intellectual search for a higher order of

ethics and religion. And whenever a believing world seeks for a noble, humane and pure morality, the result is a spiritualisation of doctrine and of belief in God. We have seen this in the case of the Jewish prophets. As soon as the conviction of a moral world order made headway among them, Jehovah lost his local and physical characteristics and was elevated to the position of universal God of justice and righteousness. The concept of Jehovah became more abstract. And this also came to pass on the comprehensive stage of the Roman Empire. The old gods lost their prestige. Cultured Roman men and women turned to the stoical moral philosophy as well as to Oriental cults. Egyptian and Asiatic mysteries exercised a fascination over Roman minds, and Judaism gained many adherents among them. This was already happening in Hellenic circles. The five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) had been translated into Greek in the third century B.C., and were known under the title of the Septuagint. In the catastrophic upheavals throughout the broad Roman-Hellenic dominions, evoked by the world wars of Pompey and Cæsar, as also by the social

fissures and internal struggles in the Roman Empire, the nobler spirits were easily susceptible to the new ideas and sentiments which arose, partly from the agitations of the masses of the people, and partly from the connection with Greek and Oriental thought. A new intellectual epoch was about to break upon mankind. We mean Christianity.

It is obvious that the new ideal world did not make the same impression upon the various sections and classes of people in the Roman dominion. Material position, education, tradition, the political and geographical conditions of the manifold groups of men were too diverse to permit of the exercise of an equal degree and kind of influence. As a whole, however, the effects were of two kinds. The dispossessed and subjugated aimed above all at a just distribution of the goods of the world, at freedom from oppression, dependence and the anxieties of existence. Their fundamental ideas were social righteousness, the putting down of the proud and the rich, and the setting up of the lowly and poor. Their goal was a communistic revolution. On the other hand, the noble and learned sections, who were influenced by mental motives,

sought after religious consolation, a new belief and firm metaphysical truths, in order to allay the unrest of their souls and to fill the void in their hearts, which was caused by the dissolution of the old gods; in other words, they desired to gain a new philosophy, a new religion. We have therefore to do with two tendencies: communism and doctrinal truth. The first tendency gradually enveloped the masses, the other embraced the higher and cultured elements. The latter section created the Christian theology, the disputes over dogmas and orthodoxy. Both tendencies were combined in many theological leaders of the masses.

We do not propose here to deal with religious and ethical dogmas, as we are not writing a history of the origin of Christianity, but a history of socialist thought. Our task is therefore confined to elucidating the communistic trend of thought in Christianity, as it was chiefly through this agency that Christianity became the ideology of the proletariat in the Roman Empire. We are now in a position to answer the question thrown out in the preceding chapter—Why the Roman proletariat, with all its struggles

and opportunities, did not evolve any communistic system of thought. Christianity was the communism of the Roman proletariat. Just as the ruling sections of Rome were incapable of creating their own philosophy and religion, but took over these from the defeated Hellenes, so also the Roman and Italian lower classes were not able to create their own proletarian ideology, but received it from the envoys of Jewish-Hellenic circles of culture.



## CHAPTER VII

### PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

#### 1. *Pre-Christian Palestine.*

IN the last two centuries B.C. the political and moral conditions of the Jews had become immeasurably tragic. After their return from the Babylonian exile, the Jews formed themselves into a religious community. The government was theocratic, but politically Palestine formed an insignificant province, first of the Persian Empire, then of the Macedonian Empire, and, after the fall of the latter, it became a part of Syria, under the rule of Seleukidians, who gradually effected the Hellenisation of the Jews. But when Antiochus Epiphanes (168) tried to root out by force the worship of Jehovah, and had made many martyrs, the pious inhabitants of the country rebelled, defeated the Syrian troops, and achieved political independence under Judas Maccabeus. These few years of the deepest humiliation and of wonderful

salvation strengthened Judaism to an extraordinary extent. From this time dates the Book of Daniel, in which the destruction of the Imperialist world empire and the emergence of the kingdom of God under the supremacy of the Jews is prophesied: "And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away. And behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto the Son of Man, and he came even to the ancient of days. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting possession."

A kingdom of righteousness is to be established, under Jewish supremacy, in place of the predatory Imperialist empire. This was the ideal.

Meanwhile, government was carried on by the Maccabees. Three tendencies manifested themselves among the Jews: the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. The Sadducees were composed of the priestly nobles and other educated persons, who inclined towards Hellenism, and did not believe in a special Jewish mission. They were the states-

manlike, practical politicians to whom the idea of a Jewish world dominion appeared impossible and ridiculous. They formed a small minority. The Pharisees comprised the middle classes, which observed strict Jewish legal ordinances: the Jews were to become a holy people, a nation of priests. National and religious sentiments were most closely associated amongst the Pharisees. The third tendency was the Essenean: a small portion of the Jews turned aside, as related above, from all national and State objectives. The Essenes aspired to a morally pure humanity, a real kingdom of God, without State or coercion, without laws from the government or the priesthood, and where the sole service rendered would be the voluntary performance of social tasks for the benefit of the community. They held themselves aloof from all party disputes, from all thirst for dominion, and were unperturbed by the quarrels between Sadducees and Pharisees.

The political independence of Judæa lasted for about a century. The national economic life became vigorous, agriculture flourished, handicrafts and industry were esteemed, and even the Rabbis and scholars regarded

it as a duty to perform physical labour as the basis of their existence. Thrift, trade, the piety and morality of the lower middle-class were the prevailing sentiments. This condition was soon to change. In the year 63 Pompey conquered Syria, invaded Palestine, and in the midst of the priestly disputes which were raging in Jerusalem the Roman cohorts stormed the city, and—to the indignation of the Jews—Pompey entered the holy of holies of the Temple. Henceforth the country lost its independence, the Jewish kings became dependent upon Rome, Roman procurators levied tribute on the people, who resented the Roman oppression, partly by conspiracies and insurrections, and partly by passive resistance. The old hope of a coming kingdom of God blazed forth with passionate ardour. Have the prophets prophesied falsely? Has not Judaism kept the commandments of God in the most trying times? And has the blood of the Jewish martyrs been spilled in vain? No! The Messiah, the King anointed by God, must soon appear, and assume world dominion. Popular leaders sprang up, new parties were formed, among which was one with terrorist

tactics; the national soil was in a state of upheaval. Nor was this all. The nation was split socially. The sentiments which prevailed at that time are indicated in the Gospel of Luke, where Mary, the mother of Jesus, on the discovery of her pregnancy, praises God and says of him: "He has scattered the proud. He hath put down the mighty from their seats and hath exalted them of low degree. The hungry he hath filled with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away" (i. 51-53).

Internally and externally Judæa was a seething furnace in which the most sublime national and social passions blazed. As was so often the case in Jewish history, when heavy oppressions weighed upon the people, or when world-shaking political events were happening, the feeling spread among the Jews: the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; the arrival of the Messiah cannot be far off.

## 2. *Jesus.*

"Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit" (Zech. iv. 6).



In this overheated atmosphere Jesus appeared.

He was born in a handworker's family in Nazareth, in North Palestine, attended a Jewish school in that village, listened to the speeches in the Synagogue, made a pilgrimage each year to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover, Jerusalem being the centre of the intense mental life of the Jews.

The bent of his mind was soon apparent. Even as a youth he was in the thick of the fierce strivings of his people. He was fond of Isaiah, and read the wonderful passage, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captive, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 17-20).

Such was the prologue. It summarised the life of Jesus. He soon attracted the attention of his fellows. Nobody could be indifferent to his personality. His intervention was challenging. Many perceived in him one of the future leaders in the libera-

tion struggle against the Romans, and endeavoured to gain his support for one of the rebellions in course of preparation. For what other purpose had God endowed him with such great gifts? And what object could be more exalted than to free his sorely oppressed people?

At first Jesus seems to have been not immune from this temptation. The national passions burned fiercely and inflamed so many pure-minded men for the liberation struggle against Rome. Why not him too? From this short period of solidarity with his people the saying probably dates, "I come not to bring peace, but a sword," as it is quite incongruous with the later period in which it is placed by the Gospel of Matthew (x. 34). Gradually Jesus attained to quite a different way of thinking. Not by the sword, not by force, but by spiritual and peaceful means, by sacrifice and inward purification will Judæa, as well as Rome, be redeemed from evil. Temporal power fails and must always fail. Temporal power derives from the principle of evil.

The whole plan of insurrection then appeared to him as a temptation of Satan. Forty

days and forty nights he wrestled with it in the wilderness. And if we should defeat the Romans and win their empire and their glory? What then? Would mankind be any the better, to receive in exchange for it an empire of Pharisees, of human ordinances and priestly regulations? No. "It is written, Thou shalt worship God and serve him alone." And what the will of God is has been proclaimed to mankind by the prophets.

Social righteousness and the redemption of the poor, contempt and condemnation of riches, abolition of all coercive rule, love to all men, a humanity which bears the kingdom of God within it, in the life of its soul—such is the secret of the kingdom of God.

And all the revolutionaries and nationalists forsook him. But the simple people flocked around him. He gained supporters and disciples. As the multitude assembled about him he ascended a mountain and spoke :

"Blessed are the poor, they that mourn, the meek, the merciful and the peacemakers, they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Blessed are they that resist not evil, but return good for evil. Blessed are they

which do not have Courts of Justice, and know not penal laws, but love their enemies, and pray for their persecutors. For all men have but one Father, who is in heaven. May his kingdom come, his will be done. For his is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever."

Jesus said to his well-tried comrades: political struggles, revolutionary insurrections, national wars, murder and sudden death, legal reforms and national autonomy will not help you to realise the ideal of the old prophecies. The kingdom of God is not of this world—it does not mean the domination and power of the Jews over all peoples, of amassing more wealth than other nations, nor does it mean observing the Temple service, or the Synagogue ceremonies, priestly purification and juridical ordinances, nor the keeping alive of patriotic interests and holding aloft national colours. All these things are ephemeral. The kingdom of God rather means: regeneration of the whole of life on the basis of infinite love of humanity—loving-kindness towards all who are weak and errant, endless compassion upon all men, the melting of all class differences, labour in

common for all. This alone will be enduring, and redeem mankind from evil. This is the kingdom of God.

Jesus was the spiritual quintessence of the prophetic development, as we have outlined it in Chapter I. sections 2 and 3. His influence was avowedly anti-national and, in the opinion of the Jewish authorities, also anti-religious. His propaganda was communist. It was the later stoical ethics, purified, enriched and deepened by the results of the intense religious culture of Exilic and post-Exilic Judaism. No Hellene ever had the consciousness of sin, and the feeling of holiness, of fear of God and joy in God to the same extent as the Jews in the time of Jesus.

It was this feeling which enabled the Jews to rebel against the Roman tyranny, and to carry on for years a heroic struggle with prodigal sacrifices. But Jesus went beyond Judaism. He broke through national boundaries, and destroyed the traditional religious structure, which had been erected with so much suffering and anguish of heart by the great Masters. He was a revolutionary, although a peaceful one, but his peacefulness



was surprisingly revolutionary. Perhaps the Jews would have forgiven him everything if he had used his popularity to further the national revolt against Rome. They begged for the life of Barabbas, who was to have been crucified on account of insurrection against the Roman domination (Mark xv. 7). But Jesus and his disciples were already so remote from Jewish life that the evangelist Mark described the national-patriotic deed of Barabbas as a murder. From the point of view of religion, politics and social arrangements, Jesus stood outside the pale of Jewish and Roman civilisation, and had to be condemned and hung on the cross.

### 3. *Communism in the Primitive Communities.*

There was not one among the immediate disciples of Jesus who had distinguished himself by his personality or knowledge, or was in a position to continue the work of the Master on the same lines. The manner in which the authors of the Gospels relate so much that is secondary or legendary in the life of their hero, and enclose the everlasting kernel of his spirit in worthless husks,

is sufficient proof that they did not comprehend Jesus. The period in which he exerted his decisive influence and himself became conscious of his mission was also too short to permit of training worthy successors. These circumstances, some years later, provided Paul with the opportunity of assuming the rôle of organiser of Christianity. Paul was a stranger to the Jewish-proletarian thoughts and sentiments. He was a Pharisee and man of learning, whose conscience was extremely troubled by the impossibility of fulfilling the accumulating laws and prescriptions. The seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans gives us a profound insight into the conflicts which raged in his mind over the substance and influence of the Jewish laws. It is not impossible that in this he was also influenced by Stoical and Gnostic interpretations of the laws as expressing the corruptibility of man fallen from the primeval state. Nevertheless, Paul assimilated the teaching of Jesus, so far as it could be assimilated by the intellect and conscience of a learned man. His whole personality and education constrained him to impart a dogmatic bias to this teaching.

His strong personality, marked by holiness, overflowing love of humanity, and boundless doctrinal ardour, forced the proletarian and communist elements into the background. These elements fought against St. Paul for a sufficiently long time, but his strength of will and self-sacrificing propaganda assured him the victory. The new doctrine triumphed over the communist practice. It was his great other-worldliness, the complete detachment of St. Paul from the material interests of life, which rendered it easy for him so to despise the institutions of this world that to maintain opposition against them was not worth the trouble. The main point was the salvation of the soul, which was assured by belief in Jesus. As long as there was an opportunity to keep alive this belief, it was a matter of indifference who exercised temporal power, or how it was exercised.

In the years which immediately followed the martyrdom of Jesus the first communities, which were almost exclusively composed of Jewish proletarians, were conducted either on a communistic basis, or in the spirit of the communistic ideal. They were proud of their poverty, they were the "Ebionites,"

the poor and needy, the trustees of social righteousness. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," declared Jesus to the disciples, in his plain and decisive manner. And as they desired to serve God, they turned their backs on Mammon. The primitive communities either lived on communistic principles, or aspired to the communist mode of living. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as every man had need" (Acts of the Apostles, ii. 44, 45). "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common (*Ibid.* iv. 32). Riches were considered a disgrace, and poverty bore an almost holy character. All were convinced that the service of Mammon, the thirst for wealth and riches, was inevitably bound up with sin, whilst poverty signified a renunciation of worldly pleasures and temporal power.

The increase in the number of Christians, the diffusion of the communities, the ascendancy of the Pauline propaganda and conception

of Christianity weakened communism, which was supplanted by generous almsgiving and a benevolent provision for the poor brothers and sisters. Gradually, however, class differences made their appearance in Christendom; among the Christians there were rich and poor, employers and workers, and the old brotherliness disappeared. The class antagonism found its theoretical expression in the struggle between "faith" and "works." This conflict is reflected in the Epistle of James, the author of which contrasted the doctrines of Jesus with those of Paul: "What doth it profit if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?" The Epistle of James describes the pride of the rich in their belief, their claim to special honour in the Christian assemblies, their hypocrisy towards their poor fellow-believers, and declares: "So faith apart from works is dead." He reminds the rich that God chose the poor, who are still exploited by the rich, and dragged before the judges. Therefore, exclaims the author, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-



eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted. Ye have heaped treasure together in the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have mowed your fields which is of you kept back by fraud crieth out, and the cries of them that have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord " (James v. 1-4).

The complaints in the Epistle of James need not, however, be generalised. In the first three centuries after Christ the communistic spirit was still strong in Christian communities. Even if passive obedience was rendered to the laws and institutions of the Roman Empire, the majority of Christians were not at all disposed to recognise them as being just. The Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church strictly adhered, at least in theory, to the anti-governmental and communistic doctrines; they condemned private property, and the claims of the State to power, military service and patriotism.

#### 4. *The Spirit of Christianity and of the Patristics.*

The third and fourth centuries of the youth of Christianity and the influence of the Greek

and Latin Church Fathers bequeathed to the middle ages a social tradition which was hostile to the dominion of Mammon and the supremacy of private economic, worldly and State interests, and favoured the ascetic and communistic modes of life. More especially was it the accounts given by "Acts" of the primitive community at Jerusalem which kept alive the longing for a communal life in the breasts of the nobler members of the new religion. Everything which Ernest Renan has written about the Apostolic age is excellent, from a psychological point of view, and reveals deep insight into the Judaic-Christian world :

"All, then, lived in common, having but one heart and one soul. No one possessed aught that was his own. In becoming a disciple of Jesus a man sold all he had and gave the proceeds to the society. The concord was perfect; there was no quarrel over dogma, no dispute about precedence. The tender memory of Jesus effaced all dissensions. Joy was in all hearts, keen and profound. (No literature has so often repeated the word 'love' as the New Testament.) The morality was austere. They grouped themselves by

households to pray and give themselves up to the ecstatic exercises. The recollection of these first two or three years lingered as that of an earthly paradise, which Christianity was thenceforth to pursue in all its dreams, and was vainly to seek to recover" (Ernest Renan, *The Apostles*).

Just as the Golden Age formed the ideal of the ancient poets and thinkers, so the primitive community of Jerusalem was the model for the Church Fathers and all earnest Christians. In the course of the first century this ideal became transfused with the millennial expectations, as well as with the most valuable results of Hellenic-Roman thought; the communistic, religio-ethical and natural rights doctrines of Plato, of the Stoa and neo-Platonists, which collectively were idealist, that is, they regarded the idea, the spiritual, the godly, as the primary supreme power in human life, to which the latter must subordinate itself; the ideal was the real and typical.

The Church Fathers—Barnabas (in the first third of the second century), Justin the Martyr (about the middle of the second century), Clement of Alexandria (in the last

quarter of the second and first quarter of the third century), his successor Origen (died 254), Tertullian (contemporary of Clement of Alexandria, flourished in North Africa), his successor Cyprian (contemporary of Origen), Lactantius (flourished at the beginning of the fourth century in North Africa, Asia Minor and Trier), Basilus of Cæsarea (died 379), John Chrysostom (Bishop of Constantinople, died 407), Ambrosius (Bishop of Mailand, died 397), Augustine (354-430, Bishop of Hippo, North Africa) were the custodians of this religious, ethical and philosophical knowledge, and all of them were partly hostile to Mammon, and partly inclined towards communism, or at least in theory they regarded the communistic way of living as virtuous, and as the ideal of a Christian.

Barnabas, who was nearest to the Apostolic age, exhorted, in the Epistle to the Christians, which is ascribed to him, "to communicate in all things with thy neighbour; thou shalt not call things thine own; for if ye are partakers in common of things that are incorruptible, how much more should ye be of those things which are perishable."

Justin the Martyr appealed to the Gospels (Matthew v. 42, 45; vi. 19, 20, 25, 31; Mark viii. 36; Luke vi. 34; ix. 25; xii. 22, 31, 34), and declared in his *Apology* (I. 14, 15), "We who loved the path to riches and possessions above any other now produce what we have in common, and give to everyone who needs." Clement of Alexandria, who was influenced most strongly by Stoic ideas, declared: "Let it then be granted that good things are the property only of good men, and Christians are good. Accordingly good things are possessed by Christians alone. But what is possession? It is not he who has and keeps it, but he who gives away, he is rich" (*Pædag.* III. 6). He is also responsible for the saying, "Lust of money is the citadel of sin." In these opinions he was followed by Origen.

Tertullian, although the son of a Roman captain in Carthage, was an implacable opponent of the Roman Imperial power, and considered it to be incompatible with the duties of a Christian to occupy any position in a heathen State: "There is no agreement between the divine and the human sacrament, the standard of Christ and the standard of



the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness" (*Idolatry*, chap. 19). He was also neither patriotic nor statesmanlike. In the year 197 he wrote: "But as those in whom all ardour in the pursuit of glory and honour is dead, we have no pressing inducement to take part in your public meetings, nor is there aught more entirely foreign to us than politics. We acknowledge one all-embracing commonwealth—the world" (*Apology*, chap. 38). In the same work, which consists of a defence of the Christians against the heathen Romans, he also says: "Only those are good brothers who are good men. But on this very account perhaps we are regarded as having less claim to be held true brothers that no tragedy makes a noise about our brotherhood, or that the family possessions which generally divide brotherhood among you create fraternal bonds among us. One in mind and soul, we do not hesitate to share our earthly goods with one another. All things are common among us but our wives."

Cyprian becomes enthusiastic in his description of the primitive Jerusalem community, and says: "All that comes from God is for our common enjoyment, and from His benefits

and gifts none is excluded, so that the whole human race may share equally in God's munificence. . . . For whatsoever is of God is in our using common, nor is any man shut out from His bounties and gifts, to the end the whole human race may equally enjoy God's goodness and bounty. In which example of equality the earthly possessor who shares his gains and his fruits with the brotherhood, free and just in his voluntary bounties, is imitator of God the Father."

Cyprian vigorously declaims against the attachment to property: "You are captive and slave of your money. You are fast in the chains and bonds of covetousness; whom Christ had once loosened, again you are become bound."

Lactantius was powerfully influenced by Plato's *Republic*, and considered economic communism to be possible, if its disciples revered God as the source of wisdom and religion. But he was decisively against community in women. Like Plato, Lactantius would also like to see the present age revert to the happy conditions of the primeval time, that age of Saturn, when righteousness still dwelt here below, when the earth was

yet the common possession of all, and all lived a common life (*Epitome*, 35 to 38).

Basilius the Great (of Cæsarea) complains in his Homilies: "Nothing withstands the power of wealth, and everything bows before its tyranny. . . . Are ye not thieves and robbers? The bread thou hast belongs to the hungry, the mantle thou wearest belongs to the ill-clad, the shoes thou hast on belong to the unshod, the silver thou hast heaped up belongs to the needy. Thou doest injury to as many men as thou couldst give to." His fight against wealth did not remain a negative criticism. Basil advocated common ownership: "We who are gifted with reason show ourselves to be more cruel than the irrational animals. The latter make use of the natural products of the earth as common things. The herds of sheep feed on one and the same pasture. Horses browse all together on one and the same meadow. But we make things to be our own which are common, and possess all that belongs to the community." Finally, Basil recommended living according to the Lycurgian laws: "Let us imitate the Hellenes and their mode of living, which was full of humanity. There are people among them

with the excellent habit of all citizens assembling in one building around a table for meals in common."

Gregory Nazianzen writes quite in sympathy with the communistic and natural rights tendencies of the Church teaching of his time. Freedom and serfdom, poverty and riches are a reversion from the primitive condition, and the consequence of greed, envy, discords, and sin. "But thou, O Christ, lookest upon the original freedom, and not upon the subsequent separation, supportest with all thy strength Nature, honourest the original freedom, and consolest poverty."

Chrysostom recommends communistic experiments, and recalls the primitive community of Jerusalem: "For they did not give in part and in part reserve, nor yet in giving all gave it as their own, and they lived moreover in great abundance. They removed all inequality from among them, and made a goodly order. But to show that it is the living separately that is expensive and causes poverty, let there be a house in which are contained children and the wife and the man. Let the one work at her wool, the other bring

his earnings from his outdoor occupation. Now tell me in which way would these spend most, by taking their meals together and occupying one house, or by living separately? Of course, by living separately, for if the ten children must live apart they would need ten several rooms, ten tables, ten attendants, and the income otherwise in proportion. Is it not for this very reason that where there is a great number of slaves they have all one table, that the expense may not be so great? For so it is division always makes diminution, concord and agreement make increase. The dwellers in the monasteries live just as the faithful did. Now did ever any of these die of hunger? Now it seems people are more afraid of this than of falling into a boundless and bottomless deep. But if we did make actual trial of this, then indeed we boldly venture upon this plan." So spoke Chrysostom in a sermon delivered in Constantinople in the year 400.

Ambrose held private property to be sinful; it was first called into existence by sin. He defends the stoical principle: "Nature provides everything for all to have in common. God has, in fact, created all things, so that



enjoyment may be common to all and the earth may be the common possession of all. Nature therefore creates the right to communism, but coercion makes of it the right to private property." "Our Lord God has willed that this earth should be the common possession of all mankind, and its produce to be shared by all, but covetousness has divided up this right of possession" (*De Nabuthe*, 1, 2; *Expositio in Lucam*, xii. 15, 22, 23).

Even Augustine, the disciple of Ambrose, was inclined to communism in theory: "Consider this, beloved, that on account of private possessions exist lawsuits, enmities, discords, wars among men, riotous dissensions against one another, offences, sins, iniquities, murders. On account of what? On account of what we each possess. Let us therefore, brethren, abstain from the possession of private property or from the love of it if we may not from its possession" (Commentary to Psalm cxxxi.). Augustine declares further: "For we have many superfluities if we keep nothing but what is necessary. Find out how much he hath given thee, and take of that what is enough. All other things which remain as superfluities are the necessities of

others. The superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. Seek what is enough for God's sake, not what is sufficient for your greediness" (Commentary to Psalm cxlvii. 12).

This was merely theory, which was made use of in preaching. In the same century (the fourth to the fifth) as Ambrose and Augustine gave expression to these thoughts, the landworkers in North Africa were engaged in a struggle for common ownership, or, at least, equality of possession, and for freedom and equality. This rural labour movement against the large landowners was known by the name of the Circumcellion, and threw in its lot with the Donatist movement, which was originally a purely religious or reformist tendency within the Church, led by Bishop Donatia, and named after him. The Donatists chiefly directed themselves against the abuses in the Church hierarchy (priestly domination), and pursued such objects as Church reforms. They were joined by the rural proletarians, who were held in subjection by the big landlords. The Circumcellionists even resorted to force. Church and State, dogmatic erudition and Roman exploiters united and finally defeated the agricultural

proletarians. St. Augustine wrote (411) against the Donatists and Circumcellionists, arguing that the just only had a right to property, whereas the Donatists and Circumcellionists could not have this right, as they had turned against civil and ecclesiastical authority.

It was not any kind of theory which caused Augustine to direct his spiritual arms against the rural proletariat of North Africa striving after economic equality. He was familiar with the Hellenic-Roman natural rights, as well as with the spirit of primitive Christianity and the Gnosis. He was one of the most learned bishops of the Catholic Church. But communism, or even economic equality, did not form a part of the official dogmas of the Church. And what was officially recognised did not have its origin in theory, but in practical policy, which was usually determined by real or supposed class interests. We perceive here the tragical conflict between theory and practice, between the spiritual ideal and material life.

This tragical conflict cuts athwart the whole history of religion, of ethics and of communism. It is evidence of the imperfection of human nature, or of a dualism of forces which struggle

with each other. It constitutes the peculiar problem of the religious, philosophical and communist thought of late antiquity, of the middle ages, and of modern Socialism. The Stoa conceived the origin of this conflict to lie in the ascendancy of private property and of civilisation; in the abandonment of the primitive communistic state. Christian theology ascribed it to the fall from grace. The later Gnosis explained it by the existence of two elemental antagonistic forces: good and evil, light and darkness. Utopian Socialism saw its cause in the irrational and defective organisation of society. Marxism regards it as the product of an economic development, which will disappear as soon as society attains to the level of economic and spiritual communism.

### 5. *The Millennium—Communistic Kingdom of God.*

During the first three centuries the belief was almost universal among the Christians that Jesus would soon return, and establish a kingdom of God on earth, in which he would reign as king. This was imagined to be the

return of the golden age of primitive communism, in which complete equality would prevail, and in which Nature, freed from the blight of the fall from grace, or from the harsh dominion of Jupiter, would again bring forth her gifts, without effort and in wonderful abundance. The sources of this belief are easily discovered by those who have attentively read our previous chapters; the Jewish prophets, Hesiod, Virgil. The old prophets prophesied that the Jews, purified by suffering, oppression and atonement, would be called to world dominion, under the direction of Jahweh, and this world dominion would establish social righteousness, eternal peace in history and nature, and joyful life for all. An application of this belief to the Christians is made by the Revelation (Apocalypse) of John (chap. xx. 1-6), which was written after the persecution of the Christians by Nero. It is stated there that God will chain up the devil (worldly power) for a period of a thousand years, and cast him into the pit, when the Martyrs will rise again, and with Christ will govern this thousand years' kingdom. This kingdom of God is therefore called the thousand years' kingdom, the Millennium, and



belief in it is called Chiliasm (*chilioi* is Greek for thousand). The Hellenic and Roman Christians identified Chiliasm with the return of the Golden Age, as described by Hesiod and Virgil. It is thus not surprising that the kingdom of God was conceived as a time of great material and spiritual joy, as a completely communistic state, in which the Christians, sinless like the first men, would be rewarded for all their suffering and persecutions. The masses clung to this belief with great tenacity, and, in their imagination, were not likely to fail to endow the coming millennial kingdom with every excellence. Even so eminent a Father of the Church as Irenæus (Bishop of Lyons towards the end of the second century) and Lactantius (beginning of the fourth century) regarded the fantastic descriptions of the kingdom of God as doctrinal truths. Special pleasure was taken in describing the effortless increase in the production of the earth.

Gradually the Chiliastic belief became weaker, and likewise the theologians were at pains to explain away the communistic spirit of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles by interpretations. In the fourth century Chris-

tianity became a buttress of the State. Communism fled to the cloisters and to the heretics, but the communistic and Chiliastic aspirations revived with every rebellion during the middle ages and the modern times, especially with the Anabaptists and in the English Revolution. Christianity, however, was the sole vital organisation of the Empire. In the third century the Roman Emperors became distinctly aware of its power, but they did not know of its internal transformation from a social revolutionary movement to a conservative force. Once more they instituted extensive persecutions of the Christians. Soon after they abandoned those futile tactics and conceded to Christianity a status equal with that of other religions (313). Towards the end of the fourth century Christianity became the State Church. It triumphed because it had adapted itself to the institution of private property and governmental politics. No longer did it strive after communistic ideals, but it wrangled over dogmas and metaphysical articles of belief. The masses became mute, the theologians became the spokesmen.

6. *Downfall of the Ancient World.*

The retrogression of the Roman Empire proceeded inevitably. The feudalisation of landlordism, the binding of the small tenant to the soil, the organisation of the urban hand-workers in guilds, were partly the cause, and partly the effect of the economic paralysis and retrogression. The depressed condition of the agricultural population was obviously not calculated to attract the town proletarians back to the land. Further, with the increasing subjection of the country people there began an emigration to the towns, where, however, relatively few workers could find employment.

The restriction of production and the diminution of the means of subsistence expressed themselves in a decrease of the population, and a reduction of the amount of labour power. And this happened at a time when the German tribes, Goths, Allemans, Vandals, Burgundians and Franks, began to press more and more strongly upon the confines of the Empire. The Empire needed soldiers, but the landlords needed workers, and the manpower requirements of both forces could not

be satisfied, because, as stated, the population decreased. Large-scale landownership was victorious, and retained the workers. The defence of the Empire became weakened to an increasing extent, so that the Germans, Huns, Avars and other surging tribes eventually succeeded in overrunning Rome. The soldier Emperor Diocletian made some attempt at re-organisation, on comprehensive and absolutist lines, at the turn of the third century. He transformed the Roman Empire into a Cæsarian and military despotism, attached the whole population to their callings, in caste fashion, regulated all and everything, but the Empire was suffering from social and economic sickness, and could not be healed. This was the period of the rise of the Christian Church, the period of the death struggle of the Roman world empire. At the end of the fourth century it dissolved into two portions: the Empire of the West and the Empire of the East. The former succumbed to the Germans, and the latter subsisted for some time as the Byzantine Empire.

7. *Causes of the Downfall of the Ancient World.*

In the preceding chapter we have described the last phases of the Roman Empire or the Ancient World. We spoke of the incurable sickness which had fallen upon this Empire. We do not yet know, however, what, in the last resort, was the cause which prepared the end of a political organism once so powerful. Overwhelming hostile forces could indeed destroy a great deal, but the German tribes and the Huns were superior to the Romans neither in numbers nor in organisation. The success of these tribes was finally possible only because Rome was already sick and could not discover within itself the means to social recovery. What then was the real cause which accomplished the downfall of Rome, and, therefore, of the ancient world?

The cause is to be found solely in the incapacity of Rome to develop the productive forces, to increase production, and to satisfy the material needs of such a great empire. Had Rome remained an agricultural empire, based upon a numerous and independent peasantry, or had it developed a technically



progressive industrial life, alongside of the latifundia economy, it would have been in a position to supply the population with the necessary means of life. The result would have been a constantly growing population, which would have been able to furnish sufficient troops, technical means and the necessary finances to defend the boundaries of the Empire.

But Rome remained, on the one hand, wedded to relatively primitive modes of production, and, on the other hand, the latifundia economy made an end of the free peasantry. The consequence was a shrinkage in the opportunities for existence, and therefore a constant decrease of the number and strength of the population. The despotism of Diocletian, the regulations of the State and the police, instead of remedying, aggravated this evil, by narrowing still more the already slender basis of life.

Why, however, did Rome remain attached to primitive modes of production? Because it was based on unfree labour.

The material retrogression was the consequence of this. Slavery and dependence impressed the stamp of degradation and

dishonour upon productive labour. The best minds and the most gifted artists turned away from productive labour, which they held to be unworthy of a free man. In this state of affairs technical progress was impossible. As soon as the means of existence proved insufficient, the Romans did not seek new labour methods, scientific and mechanical inventions, improved tools, etc., but helped themselves by force, by war, by conquest, and by robbery. Not higher production of labour, but tribute from defeated countries, was the object of Rome. As, however, Rome had conquered and plundered the ancient world, and had squandered the wealth of which it had been despoiled, the material basis of the Empire became so narrow that it could no longer support the superstructure. The impact of the undisciplined barbarian peoples which were set in motion sufficed, therefore, to overthrow the last great Empire of the Ancient World.

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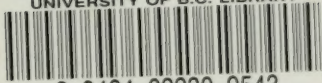
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